

**THE MANAGEMENT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT SELECTED SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN THE ZEERUST DISTRICT, NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

**by**

**MADIRAYI CHARAMBA**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF A.E VAN ZYL**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that The management of parent involvement at selected secondary schools in the Zeerust District, North West Province is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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M. CHARAMBA  
DECEMBER 2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research focuses on the issue of parent involvement at selected secondary schools in the Zeerust District of the North West Province in order to gain an understanding of relevant participants' views on the following aspects that relate to the management of parent involvement: the concept of parent involvement, ways in which parent involvement should be realised, its benefits and challenges, as well as strategies to improve the management of parent involvement in the education of learner children. The theoretical frameworks that informed this study were Epstein's theories of overlapping spheres and her typology of parent involvement, as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. These frameworks provided a meaningful lens for interpreting data and making recommendations in the final chapter. The researcher undertook an extensive literature study and conducted interviews with principals, SGB chairpersons, as well as selected SGB parent members and other active and inactive parents from the selected schools in the Zeerust district. The research shows, inter alia, that parent involvement has various benefits and that it faces several challenges which affect the management thereof. Benefits concern improvement in terms of academic performance of learners, provision of teaching and learning resources, relationships between parents and the school, learner motivation and school attendance. Challenges to parent involvement that were identified were time constraints of parents, poor communication between home and school, parents' lack of interest and commitment, principals' limitations in terms of the management of parent involvement, parents' limited education, negative parental attitudes and negative teacher attitudes. Key recommendations were made in terms of Bronfenbrenner's micro, exo- and macrosystem for addressing the management of parent involvement in a synergetic manner. They concerned, inter alia, the national Department of Basic Education in the macrosystem, provincial Departments of Basic Education in the exosystem and schools and parents in the microsystem.

## **KEY WORDS**

**Parent involvement, Epstein's overlapping spheres, Epstein's typology of parents, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, importance of parent involvement, challenges to parent involvement, strategies for parent involvement, benefits of parent involvement, South African Schools Act, School Governing Bodies, education management**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Parent involvement in the formal education of their children has become an important educational issue which has resulted in current reforms in countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Britain and New Zealand. The reforms concerning parent involvement were brought into effect by law, inter alia, by means of the *Education Reform Act* of 1988 in the United Kingdom and the *Education Act* of 1989 in New Zealand (Caldwell & Spinks 1988:11-12).

The South African education system has changed since attaining independence in 1994 and is now aligning to the worldwide trend towards self-managing schools. The underlying assumption is to shift from centralised and bureaucratic control of education towards self-management of schools. It is assumed that schools are run efficiently if school communities, which include parents, are given the power to run their own affairs (Mpumalanga Department of Education 2000:18). The new South African constitution which ushered in a new educational dispensation which makes provision for the establishment of public school governance, in accordance with certain specified criteria (Beckman & Visser 1999:152), led to the establishment of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in which parents have to play an active role. The South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996, (RSA 1996, section 16) indicates that the governance of a public school is vested in its governing bodies. SGB members, of which parents have to constitute the majority, are elected by parents of learners at the school (North West Department of Education and Sport 2017:55-56; Squelch 2000:137).

The idea behind the new system of education governance is clearly captured in the preamble of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which states that

*the country requires a new national system for schools, which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for development of all our people's talents and capabilities, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators and promote their acceptance of*

*responsibilities for organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the state....(RSA 1996: 1-2).*

The inclusion of parents to devolve their power to schools which was consolidated in the SASSA (1996, Section 21) makes provision for parents to take equal responsibility with school management for the provision of efficient education and training in schools. SASSA mandates the establishment of school governing bodies in all schools in the country in order to ensure that parents, learners and non-teaching staff actively participate in the governance and management of their schools with a view to provide better teaching and learning environments (North West Department of Education and Sport 2017:55-56); Squelch 2000:137).

As can be gathered from section 2.2.3 the present challenge of gaining effective parent involvement in the formal education of their children, apart from serving in the school governing bodies, is very noticeable. In this regard, Mr Panyaza Lesufi (2017:online), MEC for the Gauteng Department of Education, recognises the fact that challenges of parents relating to work, household management, taking care of children and time constraints impact negatively on parents' involvement with schools. According to him the raising of children by a single parent or foster parents further complicates involvement with schools. He believes that parent involvement is the number one priority of public schools and that some teachers are disheartened by inadequate parent involvement. The *Cape Digital Foundation* (2017: online) also acknowledges the importance of parent involvement. It blames dysfunctionality of schools on the inadequate functioning of the education system in its entirety. It considers both in-school factors, such as leadership and management, and out-of school factors as essential aspects that influence the state of the South African educational scenario. It mentions socio-economic circumstances and parent involvement as examples of out-of school factors and mentions parent involvement as a cost-effective and feasible means of raising the level of a culture of teaching and learning.

Researchers are unanimous in their view that there are barriers to parent involvement that need to be addressed (see Section 2.2.3). The researcher, who has ten years teaching experience in South African schools, has noticed that the majority of parents do not actively participate in the formal education of their children. He observed that all parents do not attend parents' meetings or assist their children with homework. Gounden (2016:2) is of the opinion that hindrances need to be identified by educational authorities. She posits that "parents, like their children come from different backgrounds, and have different barriers to overcome for them to involve themselves in their

children's schooling effectively". In this regard it should be mentioned that literature on parent involvement does not include departmental or provincial guidelines on the management of parent involvement other than guidelines for SGBs which relate to parents serving on them, and that this study adds to the tapestry of inadequate parent involvement by focusing on selected secondary schools in the Zeerust district of North West Province (see Section 1.7.1) in order to bring about a meaningful management thereof. The findings of this study would hopefully be used at departmental and governmental level to bring about diversified guidelines for managing parent involvement at schools.

In all probability parent involvement will never reach its full potential. Even at a well-established suburban public primary school in Gauteng, which was handed a provincial award for its excellence, a minority of parents expressed some concern in terms of the school's reporting which entailed reporting on individual learner's progress (although a detailed report is provided ever quarter), academic achievement, social and emotional wellbeing, as well as academic enrichment opportunities for learners and ways in which parents could assist their children academically (Meier and Lemmer 2015:online).

The need for improved parent involvement by means of the improved management thereof found expression in the implementation of the *Secondary School Improvement Programme*, aimed at very poor performing schools in Gauteng. It includes a section on parent involvement which is aimed at conscientising principals and teachers of secondary schools of the important role that parents can play in the formal education of their children and motivating them to interact with parents (Gauteng Provincial Department of Education 2011:6). It is founded on the knowledge that improved parent involvement is non-negotiable for better learning at schools. A home-school partnership programme, modest in scope, conducted with five poverty stricken parents in the Cape Flats, showed that the improvement of parent involvement, if properly managed, is not impossible and that parents could be taught to assist their children successfully with literacy lessons at home (Cozett & Condry 2016:online).

Van Wyk (2010:200), a well-known South African scholar on parent involvement, agrees with the view of Henderson and Berla (1994:1) who assert that when schools work with parents to support learning, learners tend to succeed not only in school, but throughout life. The Department for Children, Schools and Families in Nottingham (DCSF 2016:6-7) is convinced that parents' interests and involvement in their children's formal learning brings about better exam results, higher levels of

educational qualifications, greater progress at school and in life, higher educational expectations, as well as good behaviour accompanied by positive attitudes. Hamlin (2017:5) also mentions that parent involvement results in improved student achievement and behavioural outcomes.

Examples of parental involvement in the formal education of their children are plenty. In this regard Project Appleseed (2008:9) holds the view that parents' support of children can be improved if they attend parent-teacher conferences which could motivate them to become more involved in helping children with their homework by encouraging good behavior, such as reading, at home. According to Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8), parents can also serve as human resources in the training of co-curricular activities such as traditional dances. They, too, note that schools may involve parents by encouraging them to engage with children in learning activities at home. MacNeil and Patin (2005:45) note that parental support for children in their assignments results in improved academic achievement. The importance of parent involvement is discussed in detail in Section 2.3.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH**

The interest in conducting this study started when the researcher, who is a senior teacher, worked closely with parents of learners at a school in the Zeerust district, where he is teaching. In terms of parents who serve in the school governing body, he realised that parents often experience problems relating to a lack of understanding concerning their roles and accountability, as well their capacity to fulfill their roles, which he ascribed to their educational backgrounds. He noticed that parents in general are not involved with the schools their children attend. These observations allowed the researcher to believe that inadequate parent involvement at schools would constitute a factor that would negatively impact on the performance of the school and that school and parents do not function as the Department of Education envisages. The Department of Education expects schools to manage parent involvement and expects parents to play an important role in the formal education of their children by supporting them to perform better (Squelch 2000:138). This researcher concurs with the view that parents struggle to learn their roles and responsibilities as a result of inadequate basic literacy levels which make the realisation of the objective of good performances by learners difficult (Beckman and Visser 1999:152; Malone 2017:5).

### **1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM AND PROBLEM FORMULATION**

The lack of parent involvement seems to be a serious challenge at most secondary schools within the Zeerust District of North West Province. Although SASA clearly list all the compulsory functions of school governing (RSA 1996, Section 30), parents seem to be uncertain about their roles in SGBs, as well as the actual formal education of their children.

The researcher decided to focus on parent involvement in terms of their involvement that relates to their school involvement that concerns their children's education, rather than parents' particular involvement in SGB activities since improved learner development, aided by parent involvement, would eventually remedy many inadequacies found in the South African society. The researcher has nevertheless included the views of parent SGB members on aspects of parent involvement that excludes their roles in SGBs.

Bearing the above in mind, this research sought to answer the following main research questions based on empirical evidence: How can a meaningful management of parent involvement be brought about at selected secondary schools in the Zeerust district?

To arrive at an answer to this question the following research sub-questions need to be answered:

- What are the perceptions of parents, principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB parent members and active and inactive parents at selected schools in the Zeerust district concerning the concept of parent involvement? (This question was posed since a narrow view of their perception of parent involvement would relate to recommendations aimed at addressing challenges which influence parent involvement negatively.)
- What are the ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children?
- What are the challenges and problems concerning parent involvement that need to receive managerial intervention?
- What are the benefits of parent involvement in the education of learners?
- What managerial recommendations can be made to improve parents' involvement with the education of learners at the selected schools?



It is clear that knowledge of the challenges and problems that parents face which hinder them to participate fully in the formal education of their children would play an essential role in deciding on managerial intervention to address them.

#### **1.4 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study was geared towards collecting data from principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB parent members, as well as active and inactive parents to answer the research questions posed in section 1.3. The overall aim of this study is to bring about meaningful management of parent involvement at selected schools in the Zeerust district. The objectives which are complementary to this aim are:

- to determine the perceptions of parents, principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB parent members and active and inactive parents at selected schools in the Zeerust district of the concept of parent involvement since these could relate to recommendations concerning the management of parent involvement made in the final chapter;
- to obtain information concerning the ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children;
- to identify challenges and problems that contributes to inadequate parent involvement that need to be managed;
- to establish the benefits of parent involvement in learners' education that accentuate the importance of parent involvement; and
- to provide managerial recommendations to improve parent involvement at the selected schools.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Even though the findings of this research cannot be generalised, they would be useful to the North West Department of Education and Sport who would most probably be in a position to determine which findings and recommendation that relate to the management of parent involvement show transferability to other schools under their jurisdiction. Principals in North West Province who are challenged by inadequate parent involvement might find that the findings are applicable to their schools, and principals of secondary schools elsewhere in South Africa could extend their knowledge base concerning the problematic issue of parent involvement and may also find the findings of this

study to be relevant, even though this research is not aimed at generalisation since researchers may not generalise in qualitative research (Chiromo 2006:86).

This research would:

1. equip principals, teachers and parents of the selected schools in the Zeerust district with a sound and broadened knowledge base pertaining to parent involvement and the management thereof;
2. equip principals, teachers and teacher serving on the SGBs with knowledge that relates to the management of parent involvement, and therefore also facilitate in developing parents who are better equipped in fulfilling their involvement with schools; and
3. help closing the gap in interaction between home, school and community by improving parent participation in the formal education of their children through the implementation of appropriate managerial guidelines.

## **1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted at two secondary schools in Zeerust district of North West Province. These schools were chosen as they are similar in the sense that parents of learners in these schools are from poor communities and that they are accessible to the researcher. It was not possible for the researcher to conduct research in all of the sixteen secondary schools in Zeerust because it would not be relevant for the purposes of this study.

As mentioned, the objective of the study was not to transfer its findings to all other secondary schools in poverty stricken areas but to provide relevant information that is necessary to embrace proper management of parent involvement at the selected secondary schools and to provide an impetus for further research on the topic.

## **1.7 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

The research design, which constitutes a process of setting a plan of action to collect, analyse and interpret data to draw conclusions (Creswell 2012:250), was anchored in qualitative research since a qualitative research approach is appropriate when in-depth descriptions of a phenomenon, in this case that of parent involvement at selected schools and its managerial implications, is required

(Chiromo 2006:86). A qualitative research approach was adopted because it makes provision for a rich description and much detail that allow the readers to understand the context of the actual setting. The research was expository rather exploratory in nature. According to Seliger and Shohamy (1989:117) exploratory research is defined as “initial research into a hypothetical or theoretical idea”(cf. Chiromo 2006:88). In terms of this study, the researcher applied established ideas, thereby engaging in expository research in order to gain an understanding of parent involvement as understood and practiced in terms of selected secondary schools in the Zeerust district of the North West Province, aimed at the improvement of the management of parent involvement.

### **1.7.1 Population and sampling**

Chiromo (2006:16) views a population as “all the individuals, units, objects or events that will be considered in a research project”. This study focused on parent involvement at two selected secondary schools, two of sixteen secondary schools in the Zeerust district which constitute the population of the study. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the schools. Both find themselves in the same social context and are rich in information concerning parent involvement. As shown, richness in information is a key component of purposeful sampling (Patton 1990:169; McMillan & Schumacher 2010:325-326).

As mentioned, participants consisted of the two principals of the two schools, the two SGB chairpersons, eight parents serving in the SGBs of each school and five active and inactive parents from each school. The principal of each school informed the SGB of the researcher’s envisaged research.

To select parents, the researcher selected five parents randomly from a register of active parents and a register of inactive parents of learners in grades 8A, 9A, 10A, 11A and grade 12A from each school to obtain the names of ten active and ten inactive parents in total. The selection of the active and inactive parents was conducted with the help of the principals who engaged their secretaries to assist in the identification of the active and inactive parents at each school who were available for participation in this research, based on registers previously compiled by the secretaries. The registers indicated the names of parents who were involved in particular activities and the names of parents who neither attended parents days nor partook in terms of any function held at the two schools.

The two principals, two SGB chairpersons and sixteen parent members serving in the two SGBs were selected according to purposeful sampling. The sample size was considered manageable in terms of the time of approximately thirty minutes that would be required to conduct each interview. Purposive sampling was also used to choose the schools. As mentioned in Section 1.7.2, from the 16 schools, two schools from the same socio-economic status were selected. The one school was the school where the researcher was employed. Not only was the researcher motivated to find out more about the practice of parent involvement and the management thereof at his school, he also took into consideration that personnel who knew him and parents of children who attended the school where he was teaching would be willing to share information with someone whose research was ultimately geared towards improved learner performance.

### **1.7.2 Qualitative research approach**

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) (in De Vos 1998:240) define qualitative research as “an overall holistic approach to social interaction involving describing and making sense, as well as an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter”. Creswell (2013:45) defines qualitative research as “an inquiry in which researchers collect data in face to face situations by interacting with persons in their settings”. This means that qualitative researchers aim at studying phenomena in their natural settings and attempt to make sense of and interpret them in terms of the meaning that selected people attach to them. Creswell (2013:45) further states that qualitative research describes and analyses people’s individual and collective actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. To ensure validity of research, more than one data collection method was applied to ensure triangulation (Creswell 2007:74). This included a literature review and semi-structured interviews.

The researcher used individual semi-structured interviews and semi-structured focus group interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with two principals and two SGB chairpersons of the two schools and semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with five active and five inactive parents, as well as eight parents serving in the SGB from each school. Interviews were appropriate because the researcher wanted to obtain information from information-rich participants, if possible in their natural settings, as was the case for the principals and the SGB parents serving in the SGBs. Conducting field work in natural settings is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (1997:391) who say that “in qualitative research, the researcher collects data by interacting with selected persons in their settings and obtaining relevant information”. Another reason for choosing

the qualitative research approach is that it is user friendly and encourages participants to interact with the researcher (Creswell 2007:73).

### **1.7.3 Data collection methods**

As mentioned, the researcher undertook a literature study and conducted interviews.

#### **1.7.3.1 Literature study**

The literature study mainly focussed on definitions of parent involvement, benefits of parent involvement, challenges related to parent involvement and ways of increasing parent involvement. It informed the empirical research and served as a theoretical base to which the empirical findings could be related. The literature study also enabled the researcher to establish theoretical frameworks, namely that of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and Epstein's typology of parents and overlapping of spheres which related to the interpretation of the empirical findings and recommendations concerning the management of parent involvement. Data collected from relevant documents was analysed and informed individual and focus group interview schedules.

#### **1.7.3.2 Interviews**

Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995:30) describe an interview as "a structured conversation between researcher and respondent used to complete a survey". The individual and semi-structured interviews conducted for this research helped the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' opinions and experiences Creswell (1994:150).

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two principals and the two SGB chairs. The advantage of individual interviews, according to Creswell (1994:150), is that it enables the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of a person's opinion and experiences.

Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with the parents serving in the SGB of the two schools and two groups of parents of each of the schools, namely the active and inactive parents, to establish their understanding of parent involvement, its benefits, its challenges and problems faced, as well as their thoughts on improving parent involvement. The focus groups chosen were appropriate since SGB parents who had been working together for some time for a common goal

would be motivated to air their views collectively. Parents of children in the same school would also be likely to contribute to the interviews since they were aware that this research was rooted in striving for better performance at the school. Hoberg's (1999:93-94) view that focus group interviews have a potential to yield a wide range of responses was also considered in the decision to conduct focus group interviews.

#### **1.7.4 Data analysis**

Data analysis involves the interpretation of events and responses of participants. A tape recorder was used to collect data for this study and the responses of the participants were transcribed in preparation for data analysis. According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2010:109), qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of arranging data into different categories and identifying patterns and similarities among the categories. Furthermore, Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006:76) describe data analysis as an attempt by the researcher to summarise collected data in a dependable and accurate manner. After collecting the data, the researcher familiarised himself with the data through listening to the recordings of interviews and reading and re-reading the notes concerning striking occurrences noticed during interviews. The researcher transcribed the interviews in order to obtain a verbatim record of data since this would enable the researcher to compare and contrast data.

Data collected during interviews was analysed in terms of themes and categories to make provision for a systematic presentation of findings which, in turn served as a framework for drawing conclusions and recommendations to bring about a meaningful management of parent involvement at the selected schools. The data collected by the specified data collection instruments was integrated during the analysis thereof, thereby making provision for a multi-dimensional strategy in addressing the research questions. (Also see Section 3.4).

#### **1.7.5 Trustworthiness**

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004:118-140) validity refers to "the accuracy of references, interpretations, or actions made on the basis of test scores". Reliability refers to "the consistency or stability of test scores. If a test or assessment procedure provides reliable scores, the scores will be similar on every occasion" (Johnson & Christensen 2004:133). However, these explanations relate to quantitative research. In terms of qualitative research, validity implies credibility of research which can be defended when challenged (Bashir 2008:39). This would imply that triangulation (the use of

two or more data collection methods is applied and that bias is restrained as far as possible during the collection and analysis of data (Creswell 2012:258-9). It would also mean that the anonymity of participants are guaranteed to allow for honest and information rich responses. It was shown that two data collection methods were applied for this study, namely a literature study and interviews. Objectivity was maintained by the researcher.

Reliability in qualitative research would not be interpreted as the reproduction of congruent results as is the result with quantitative research. Rather, reliability would refer to constant and accurate capturing, analysis and interpretation of results since qualitative research is not geared towards establishing whether similar results are replicated (Merriam 2002:27). As shown, the researcher aimed at accurate collection, analysis and interpretation of results. It is noted that the terms validity and reliability are no longer frequently used in qualitative research and that an all-embracing terms, namely trustworthiness is often used as a comprehensive criterion which encompasses all the matters referred to above.

#### **1.7.6 Data collection procedures**

According to Chisi (2000:35), a “data collection procedure is a step taken in administering instructions and collection of data from subjects under study”. In this study the researcher sought for permission from the Circuit Manager of the Zeerust District Office who gave permission to conduct research at the two schools. The SGB chairpersons, parents serving on the SGBs and other active and inactive parents were informed about the research by the principals, stating that participation was voluntary. The researcher made appointments with participants to arrange for interviews during their free time. Written consent which included, inter alia, the aspects of voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from research at any point was accentuated prior to the commencement of interviews (De Vos 1998:2; see Appendix IX).

Permission to record the interviews were obtained and the interviewees were reminded of their ethical rights prior to the commencement of the interviews. They were informed that they would gain access to the completed research at their relevant schools. Transcripts were made of the audio-taped interviews and the interviews were analysed according to the description provided in Section 1.7.4.

## 1.8 ASPECTS PERTAINING TO ETHICS

De Vos (1998:24) defines ethics as a

*set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is widely accepted, and offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, researchers, assistants and students.*

Johnson and Christensen (2004:94) define ethics as “the principles and guidelines that assist the researchers to uphold things they value”. Research ethics are indeed a set of principles which guide and assist researchers in conducting educational studies. Ethical guidelines (as outlined by the *American Educational Research Association* (AERA) (Johnson & Christensen 2004:118-119) that need to be followed by educational researchers are informed consent, freedom to withdraw and confidentiality and anonymity.

The researcher applied the required criteria and gained the trust of the research participants by assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. Mason (2001:290) argues that ethical concerns must be a priority on the research agenda of any researcher. De Vos (1998:2) posits that “the identified participants must be informed about the investigation, its goal and the procedures that will be followed to collect data before they decide to take part in the research”.

In this study the researcher gave ample time to the participants before the commencement of the interviews to decide if they wanted to participate in the research or not. The researcher informed the participants both verbally and in writing that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they were not comfortable with the research process (see Appendix IX). The researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study, procedures to be followed during the research process, as well as the reasons why the participants were chosen. As mentioned, the researcher also assured confidentiality to the participants. This encouraged the participants to open up and give information willingly.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of South Africa’s *Ethics Clearance Committee* of the *College of Education*. Relevant documents pertaining to permission to conduct research (see Appendix III) were included in the application. Furthermore, as mentioned, the researcher sought



permission from the Circuit Manager of the *Zeerust District Office* who granted permission to conduct research at the two schools (see Appendix V).

## **1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

The theoretical frameworks that informed this study were Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres and her typology of parents, as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

Parent involvement is a phenomenon which should extend beyond the domains of the home and school. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres (Epstein 1995:704) which posits that parents, schools and communities should work together, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1979:22-29) support this perspective. These frameworks would also be relevant in terms of the provision of recommendations concerning the management of parent involvement.

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres relates to her theory of the typology of parents which, as mentioned, can also be considered as a theoretical framework of this research. According to her typology of parents, parent involvement includes the interaction with the school in terms of parenting at home, communication between school and parents, volunteering of parents to engage with activities at the school, parents supporting their children's learning at home, parents being involved in decision making at school, as well as parents' and schools' collaboration with the community (Epstein 1995:704; Epstein 2008:11-12; Epstein and Sanders 2001:527).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model embraces three spheres or systems that impact on the child's development (1979:3). These are the microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem. In terms of this study it would mean that parent involvement, a factor which influences the child's development, would also be influenced by these three systems. The microsystem which is closely related to the child is represented by components which directly influence the child, such as his/her immediate family, significant individuals such as his/her peers and teachers and other influential people at school. These components do not function in isolation, but interact with each other. The exosystem which is further removed from the child consists of indirect influential component such as family friends, neighbours, welfare services and the extended family which relate to the local community (Bronfenbrenner 1979:29) The macrosystem is furthest removed from the child but would bear an influence on the child's development, and also on parent involvement which has a direct influence on the child's development. Components relating to the macrosphere are inter alia, economics, social

values, politics and a country's laws which pertain to society at large (Landsberg, Kruger and Nel 2005:11). Bronfenbrenner's theoretical perspective explains relations between different systems which involves family, school, community and society but does not explain the reasons for the boundaries between them and how beneficial changes in family-school-community relations can be achieved.

A discussion of the theoretical frameworks are included in the literature study in Sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 since they constitute a key element without which a literature study on parent involvement, in terms of the parameters of this study, would be incomplete.

## **1.10 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 outlines the problem to be addressed in the study, the background of the problem, motivation for the research, the aims and objectives of the study, description of the problem and problem formulation, methodological issues, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness, the significance, scope and limitations of the study, a preliminary review of the theoretical frameworks, and definition of key concepts.

In Chapter 2 prevailing theories and research that relate to parent involvement and the management thereof, including the theoretical frameworks, are examined.

Chapter 3 presents a discussion of the research methodology that was used to investigate parent involvement at the selected secondary schools. The rationale for the choice of research methods, the data collection, data analysis and strategies are provided.

In chapter 4 a presentation and analysis of the findings regarding parent involvement at the selected secondary schools in the Zeerust district which relate to the management of parent involvement are presented. These inform the recommendations which occur in Chapter 5.

A synopsis of the research and its findings, together with the recommendations arising from this study, are presented in Chapter 5

## 1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The meaning of the concepts “parent and parent involvement” were considered relevant for this study.

### **Parent**

The South African School Act (RSA 1996 Section 16) defines a parent as:

- a) the parent or guardian of a learner*
- b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner or*
- c) the person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs a) and b) towards the learner’s education at school.*

In terms of the above, the term “parent” includes all persons who are children’s caregivers at home. Some caregivers such as grandparents, aunts, or older siblings may be biologically related to children. Others, however, may be legally appointed guardians or persons who are entrusted by one or both of the biological parents with the raising of children (Gaetano 2007:149). The term “parent” may be defined broadly as an adult with the responsibility for the financial and emotional care and support of the school going age child (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding & Walberg 2005:132). For this study, only biological parents of learners were interviewed to remain within the parameters of the scope of a dissertation.

### **Parent involvement**

Squelch and Lemmer (1994:93), and Decker and Lemmer (1993:115) describe parent involvement as “the participation of parents in a wide range of school based and home-based activities to improve the children’s education”. It implies support given to the school by means of cooperation, participation and partnership. The term goes by several synonyms for example “parent engagement”, “partnership” and “collaboration with schools”. Myeko; (2000:12) defines parent involvement as “a process through which parents meaningfully participate in the various educational activities of their children”.

The UNISA Metropolitan Life Project (1994:2) for the training of teachers in parent involvement defines parent involvement as follows:

*The active and supportive participation of parents as partners and allies of the teacher in the primary aspects of formal and informal education of their own child and/or broad education of their community in an individual and/or collective way and in a structured/orderly manner in order to achieve the objectives of education as fully as possible.*

This definition can be considered to be comprehensive since it calls for the active participation of parents as partners in all educative activities, curricular or non-curricular. It also relates to the importance of interaction between parents, the school and the community which is in line with Epstein's (1995:702) view that parent involvement should be considered more broadly than only in terms of parents and schools. This definition was found to be the most comprehensive prior to Epstein's (1995:702) view on parent involvement which not only ascribes various functions in which parents and schools have to partake to parent involvement, but also emphasises cooperation between parents, schools and community as being essential for parent involvement. It calls for the active participation of parents as partners in all educative activities, curricular and non-curricular.

The above definitions imply that parent involvement is the engagement of parents in home based and school based and even community based activities aimed at enhancing children's education. The definitions also suggest that parental participation in the education of their children is necessary for parents to understand their children better.

The interaction between home, school and community is illustrated by Van Zyl's (2013:229) definition of parent involvement. Bearing in mind the complexity of parent involvement which prevents distinguished, internationally acknowledged South African scholars of parent involvement from defining it, he says: "Perhaps parent involvement can best be summarised as mutually beneficial support and/or active participation between parents and the school in term of their children's formal education, as well as the school's endeavours to improve basic caring [which also relates to support and assistance given to children's school related responsibilities] and nurturing by parents at home, preferably with the help of the community."

Parents are often referred to as allies of teachers which means that this kind of partnership implies a special relationship between equals, that parents are equal to education managers and teachers and that power and control should be evenly distributed (Laureau 2000:35).

## **Education management**

Education management cannot be divorced from the meaning of the concept of management in general. Management can be defined as “the process of working through individuals and groups and other resources to accomplish goals (Everard & Morrison 1990:5). The same definition would apply to education management except that the process described would now be placed within a particular setting, namely that of education. As is the case for management in general, education management means that four key components are applied. These are: planning of which the main function is the provision of directives and goals (Van Zyl (2013:144-146); organising which relates to “the function of arranging and forming things into a coherent whole (Adair(2017) in Van Zyl 2013:147) and implies coordination and delegation; control which ensures that people and other resources are applied effectively (Van Zyl 2013: 153); and leadership, a complex concept, which in essence means implementing an appropriate leadership approach and style to influence people and inspire them to work towards the goal of a group (cf. Marishane 2013:96). The components of management in this study find close relation to the final chapter which provides recommendations to establish the meaningful management of parent involvement in a synergetic manner.

## **1.12 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an introduction to this study was given. The background of the problem was followed by a description of the problem, the problem formulation, aims of the study, research questions and the significance of the study. In addition, the significance and the scope and limitations of the study were discussed, an exploration of the research approach and research methods were provided, a brief review of the study’s theoretical frameworks was given, the trustworthiness of the study was explained, key relevant concepts were defined and aspects pertaining to ethics were considered. A relevant literature review is presented in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an analysis of relevant literature on parent involvement that relates to this study which is aimed at providing managerial guidelines to improve parent involvement at selected secondary schools in the Zeerust district. It commences with a succinct discussion of the South African educational setting that relates to parent involvement before and after 1994. This is followed by a section on African voices on parent involvement aired after liberation which shows that parent involvement in South Africa has many shortcomings and emphasises the necessity of this study which is geared towards commencing a meaningful management of parent involvement at the selected schools which takes cognisance of problems relating to parent involvement (see section 1.3). The importance of parent involvement receives attention since it, too, points towards the necessity of aiming at the provision of managerial guidelines that would improve the quality and scope of parent involvement at the selected schools. A discussion of the theoretical frameworks applied are included in order to gain an understanding of the lens through which this study is approached. These are Epstein's theoretical frameworks of parent involvement, as well as Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model which, as mentioned in Section 1.9 can also be related to parent involvement and the management thereof. The mentioned theoretical frameworks are considered to be of importance in any research on parent involvement.

#### **2.2 PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The perception of parent involvement in the South African educational setting has changed over time in accordance with the views of the ruling government during two key periods: the period before the liberation of 1994 and the period following the first democratic elections held in 1994. Soon after attaining its independence the South African government democratised the education system which had previously been designed in terms of racial division through legislation and statutes (Van Wyk 2000:49). In 1994 independence ushered in a new era in the South African education system and brought a formal end to apartheid rule. A shift from authoritarianism to democratic rule through the introduction of a new constitution, that included unequivocal commitment and accountability to representative and participatory democracy, took place. One key aim of decentralisation was to involve parents in the education system Mncube (2009:2).

### **2.2.1 The situation prior to 1994**

In most former white schools statutory parent bodies (usually called statutory management councils) functioned at schools prior to 1994. According to Van Schalkwyk (1988:88) “these bodies had certain powers bestowed on them by law. All members serving on these bodies were elected by parents”.

In terms of “educational provision for blacks, schools committees were established, according to Mkwanazi, (1994:25) by the government since 1953”. These were noticeable different from white schools. Only four to six of the committee members could be elected by parents, while the rest of the members were government appointees. However, these structures were rejected by the black community and many schools chose to institute Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs). These bodies did not have powers acknowledged by legislation (Heystek & Paquette (1999:189). Van Wyk (2001:1) posits that “both black and white schools parent bodies dealt mostly with issues pertaining to school fees”. According to him “the statutory governing bodies which were in existence by then were only found in white dominated schools” (Van Wyk (2001:49). He further notes that in “the majority of black schools a cosmetic type of alliance existed made up of a few members of parent bodies who were elected; the bulk were government appointees” (Van Wyk (2001:49).

### **2.2.2 The situation after 1994**

Van Wyk (2000:49) states that independence was meant to “combat racism, sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance”, and that the National Department of Education and the nine Provincial Departments of Education had to implement this innovation. Heystek (2006:477) notes that attempts were made to democratise the management of education through a process of decentralisation which had become a worldwide trend. Brown and Duku (2008:416) concur that the redistribution of power, administration, responsibilities and functions away from central government to lower levels was a big achievement that characterised this change.

According to Frielinghaus (2005:2) liberation was meant to transform the colonial education system, which was characterised by racial inequality and segregation policies, into a non-racial education system based on the principles of equity in order to advance the democratic transformation of South African society. According to Brown and Duku (2008:413) the issues of school governance in South Africa emerged as a response to a new national demand for educational reform. As part of the

change process, the Department of Education (DoE) published a White Paper, entitled the *Organisation, Government and Funding of Schools* (DoE, 1996), to encourage participatory democracy at school level. Parents were accorded active and responsible roles in a collective decision making process (Republic of South Africa 1996, Section 23). The South African Schools Act 84, of 1996 (SASA), which came into effect at the beginning of 1997 accorded parents the right to get involved in making decisions at schools.

In terms of SASA, all public state schools in South Africa must have democratically elected School Governing Bodies (SGBs) comprised of parents, learners, educators, non-teaching staff and the school principal. According to Frielinghaus (2005:2) the Act demands that all public schools must elect an SGB as part of the governance and management structure of the school. According to Van Wyk (2000:49) school management and governance are viewed separately in terms of the Act. While management of the school is considered the responsibility of the principal and the professional staff that constitute the School Management Team (SMT), the (SGB) is responsible for the governance of the school. However, it could be said that they cannot be seen as two independent entities since the SMT would act according to policy prescribed by the SGB whilst the SGB would be approached by the SMT if deemed necessary. According to the SASA (RSA 1996, Section 23) the SGB consists of the principal as an ex-officio member and selected members from various stakeholders, namely the educators at the school, non-educator staff, democratically elected parents of learners at the schools, and learners in grade eight or higher at secondary school level. In any given situation, the parents or guardians of learners must exceed the total of other members in the SGB by one (Republic of South Africa 1996, Section 23).

Parents employed by a school may not represent parents on the SGB. An active member of the body may be reimbursed for operational costs incurred although he/she may not receive any remuneration for executing the duties of the SGB (RSA 1996, Section 23). Sayed and Soudien (2005:112) criticise the latter part of legislation according to which parents who afford their personal time to school activities may not receive any form of remuneration. The statute further states that only a parent may assume the post of chairmanship. Members of the SGB are free to participate in various sub-committees constituted for the purpose of advancing the interest of learners by means of their expertise (RSA 1996, section 30). In 2007 Lemmer (2007:218) stated that “a considerable body of evidence suggests that changes in governance arrangements are only weakly related to teaching and learning”. They therefore have little, if any, effect on student achievement. Even if this very important deficiency is overlooked, parent SGB members do not always seem to fulfill their



responsibilities adequately (Lemmer 2007:218). While the execution of the mandate of parents serving in SGBs is possible in urban areas, parents in rural areas, who are of a different socio-economic standing and who are often illiterate, have been found to be marginalised in terms of participation in SGBs (Mncube 2009:7). Although the decentralisation of the governing of schools guaranteed parental ownership, it seems as if active participation by parents does not always materialise. The next section views parent involvement from an African perspective.

### **2.2.3 African voices on parent involvement in South Africa**

After a scrutiny of sources on parent involvement by African researchers in South Africa, this researcher has come to the conclusion that parent involvement still finds itself in its infancy. Views expressed in this regard reverberated the initial view of the researcher which prompted the researcher to undertake this study. As shown, parent involvement was initially accentuated primarily in terms of parents' role in SGBs of schools. Parent involvement in terms of parents' interaction with schools which related to learners formal education was, however, not emphasised by SGBs.

Studies show that many factors hamper parent involvement. In this regard Maluleke (2014:40) posits that in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province few parents of three selected primary schools indicated an appreciation of parent involvement. Parents did not mention supervision or monitoring of their children's school work at all. Parents' limited education, disadvantaged social and economic status, as well as teachers' negative attitudes towards parents, and the absence of a school policy concerning parent involvement, acted as barriers which prevented parents from being involved with schools.

A quantitative study that involved 330 teachers at primary schools in the rural Mawa and Molotsi Circuits in Mupani district of Limpopo Province showed that social and economic barriers were moderate to significant impediments that obstructed parent involvement. Teachers acknowledged the value of parent involvement in terms of the performance and social behaviour of learners, but complained that school initiatives and strategies to improve parent involvement were not satisfactory (Mathekga 2016:80-83). The latter finding concurs with that of Ramadikela (2012:98-104) who researched parent involvement at historically disadvantaged schools in the Tshwane West district in Gauteng. This study found that minimal managerial involvement of School Management Teams and particularly school principals were characterised by inadequate initiation, facilitation and maintenance of parent involvement at three selected historically disadvantaged schools, despite the

fact that views held, not only by parents, but also principals, teachers and SGB members, showed that participants perceived improved learner behaviour, enhanced self-esteem of learners as benefits of parent involvement. Parents' awareness of school matters, improved scholastic performance of learners, cost effectiveness and a sense of school ownership amongst members of the community were also mentioned as advantages of parent involvement. The participants were also aware of the following barriers to parent involvement: parents' lack of time, parents' lack of interest, illiteracy, lack of education, defective parent-teacher communication channels, changing family structures and unemployment (Ramadikela 2012:98-104; 105-108).

Deficient communication was shown to be a major obstacle that hindered the quality of parent involvement at two selected public secondary schools in the Umbumbulu Circuit, KwaZulu-Natal. Interviews with principals, teachers and parents indicated that home-school communication which is vital for establishing and maintaining home-school relations needs to be revisited because written communication by means of letters do not bring about the desired results, and that the absence of a school policy on communication which informs teachers and parents about communication procedures also contributes to poor parent involvement (Sibisi 2015:81).

Inadequate formal education of parents were shown by Bekhimpilo (2015:86-87) to be a major reason for deficient parent involvement. Interviews with parents, their learner children and Heads of Departments (HODs) of four secondary schools in Circuit 10 of the Libodi District of the Eastern Cape Province revealed that schools were familiar with their communities' literacy levels. Hence, they knew learners' backgrounds. Participants from all the mentioned groups showed that parents with a low level of education were not capable to assist their children with school work as a result of very low literacy levels and unfamiliarity with the content of the learning areas. Nevertheless, especially the mothers pointed out that they encouraged their children to work hard, although they showed less interest in their children's school work than more educated parents. As most, if not all other studies on parent involvement, assume or point out, the mentioned study emphasised the significance of partnerships between home and school for learners' success in formal education.

A study by Vhulahani (2015:98-99) describes a very dire picture of parent involvement at three schools in the Bojanala District in the North West Province. Interviews with principals in the Madibeng area showed that two principals had a very basic and narrow view of parent involvement, whilst the other principal did not actually fully comprehend that parents had a significant role to play in the formal education of their children. The majority of teachers shared this principal's view.

Parents' concept of parent involvement was limited and did not exceed checking learners' work. Causes mentioned for sub-standard parent involvement included uneducated and illiterate parents, long distances from home to school, lack of time, the shunning of parental responsibility, no effort made by teachers to meet parents, abuse of alcohol by parents, language barriers, as well as disrespect shown by teachers and school management teams.

As indicated, it is not difficult to find reasons for a lack of parent involvement in South Africa. The following reasons were identified for selected schools in different geographical areas:

Selected secondary schools in the Umlazi district in the Mayville circuit of Kwazulu-Natal: inadequate home-school communication, poor school leadership, an unwelcoming school environment, lack of finances, limited writing skills of parents (Parmaswar 2014:56-59).

Selected secondary schools in the Kgakotlou circuit of the Capricorn district of Limpopo Province: lack of official school policies, insufficient structures or committees on which parents serve, insufficient knowledge and illiteracy amongst parents, negative attitudes of teachers towards parent involvement, inadequate communication (Manamela 2015:91-92; 97; 104-106).

Selected secondary schools in the Breyten circuit, Mpumalaga Province: apathy, negative attitudes of educators and principals, level of education of parents, socio-economic status of parents and transport to and from schools (Nhlabati 2015:120). (Although these factors only relate to parents serving in the SGBs of the selected schools, they are similar those mentioned in this section and in Section 1.1 which refer to parents who do not serve in the SGBs.)

Selected secondary schools in the Ekurhuleni North district, Gauteng Province: dysfunctional/child-headed families, high level of illiteracy, socio-economic factors, apathy, negative attitudes of educators and poor communication between school and parents (James 2014:124).

Research undertaken by African researchers mainly interrogates parent involvement in terms of its challenges which need to be overcome by meaningful management. The next section focuses on the importance of parent involvement which further accentuates the need for bringing about a culture of which emphasises the active management of parent involvement, as this study does.

## **2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

This section shows that parent involvement plays a significant role in the education of children by means of a discussion of the benefits associated with it. The significance of these accentuates the need for research on parent involvement and the management thereof. The focus is placed on four key contributions of parent involvement after which parent involvement is discussed in terms of benefits to learners, teachers, schools and the community. This section bears relevance to this study since it provides information which relates to recommendations concerning the improvement of parent involvement by means of the management thereof in the final chapter.

### **2.3.1 Key contributions of parent involvement**

In this sub-section improved learner academic performance, the promotion of acceptable thought patterns and behaviour and the upliftment of the communities as identified by Van Zyl (2013:230) are discussed.

#### **2.3.1.1 Improved learner academic achievement**

According to Hill and Taylor (2004) (in Van Zyl 2013:230) “cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have consistently shown that parent involvement in their children’s formal education is associated with academic performance”. Van Wyk (2008) (in Van Zyl 2013:230) holds the view that “when schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school but throughout life”. This shows that children tend to perform better in school and become successful in everyday life if their parents are involved in their formal education. Parent involvement is therefore paramount in the lives of learners.

#### **2.3.1.2 Promotion of acceptable thought patterns and behavior**

Hill and Taylor (2004) (in Van Zyl 2013:231) assert that parent involvement relates to becoming united with the school and results in improved academic performance and an enlarged base promoting acceptable behaviour among learners. Other benefits that accrue from parent involvement include: decreased truancy, improved attitudes of learners, improved learner behaviour, as well as decrease in dropout rate which may lead to improved academic performance. Moreover, parent

involvement promotes learner motivation (Van Wyk (2008) (in Van Zyl2013:231).When parents are actively involved in their children`s formal education, children would strive to do well in all areas.

### **2.3.1.3 Uplifting communities**

Schools working with communities through different projects can cover a wide array of functions varying from improving the healthcare of learners to obtaining the services of specialists in fields that relate to school subjects to provide extra-curricular support to teachers and/or learners, thereby enlarging South Africans` social capital.

Anglin (2011) (in Van Zyl2013:232) holds the view that increased parent involvement helps schools become more central to community life. He goes on to say that parent involvement could become essential in extending the role of the school to involve much more than effective teaching and learning. Schools could become a “one stop centres for community services” where they, in cooperation with relevant communities partners, can execute a variety of community functions including healthcare, job training and improving parents` and other members of the community`s skills pertaining to parenting, family well-being, computer technology and literacy. Schools could also work in groups with community development institutions in developing communities (Anglin (2011) in Van Zyl 2013:232).

## **2.3.2 Benefits of parent involvement to its key stakeholders**

In this section the benefits of parent involvement to learners, teachers, schools and community are discussed.

### **2.3.2.1 Benefits of parent involvement to schools**

Parent involvement has a great deal of benefits to schools. When parents are actively involved in school activities, the probability of the school to run smoothly is high. According to Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon,(1997:2) parent involvement has a great influence on improving school programmes and school climate. They assert that parent involvement may provide schools` family services, improve provision of teaching and learning resources, support financial, physical and intellectual means of the school and improve the relationship and contact between home and school. Schools have tended to move away from keeping parents out of school affairs, recognising that there

are many positive benefits to parent involvement, contrary to earlier times when parent involvement was equated to the meetings of Parent Teachers' Organisations (PTOs). Current involvement is often considered more hands-on, with parents volunteering to engage in school activities and, in some cases, as in the United States of America, making decisions concerning the school curriculum.

Gorton (1983:440) argues that “through participation by parents and other citizens, the school receives ideas, expertise and human resources, all of which will improve decision-making and educational activities of the school”. According to Booth and Dun (1996:46), “the advantages of parent involvement for the school are that parents can be used as a powerful force of change at school”. Davies (1993:206) indicates that:

*Increased parent and community participation benefits schools as teachers' workload can be made more manageable; parents who are involved have more positive views of the teachers, school, parents and community; members who participate in schools are more likely to be supportive of the school.*

#### **2.3.2.2 Benefits of parent involvement to learners**

The involvement of parents with schools has perceived benefits for the learner. Heystek (2003:3) asserts that:

*Parents and schools are partners in the education of children because schools are formalised extensions of the family. In that view researchers seem to be agreed on the benefits that accrue to the learner if parental involvement at schools is well managed and coordinated by management.*

Schools have realised that it is beneficial to involve parents in school affairs. When children are supported by parents they tend to achieve more, they attain higher test scores, they complete their homework, they become motivated and they develop a better self-esteem and improved behaviour (See Section 2.3.1.1). Another benefit of parental involvement is that learners obtain higher test scores, better grades and better attendance (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding & Walberg 2005:4). Among factors contributing to inadequate parental involvement is learners' negative school

experiences and learners' uncertainty about what to do in terms of their studies (Lemmer & Van Wyk 1993:9).

### **2.3.2.3 Benefits of parent involvement to teachers**

Research supports the fact that parent involvement is beneficial to teachers. In this regard Lemmer and Van Wyk (1996:6) point out the advantages of effective parent involvement as follows:

*Parent involvement improves the relationship among parent, teachers and school; the teacher's knowledge of the child's home situation improves which can influence his/her education; it positively increases commitment to teaching; and reduces the teacher's workload. It is an advantage for the teacher to know that the parent recognises the complexity of their role in the classroom.*

Swap (1993:11) agrees with the above, stating that in situations where teacher experience support and appreciation from parents, teachers will rekindle their own enthusiasm for problem solving. Parent involvement, therefore motivates teachers to teach well.

Henderson and Berla (1994:51) assert that:

*Parent involvement helps teachers and principals to experience higher job satisfaction. Teachers often receive respect from parents. Parent involvement improves communication between parents and teachers.*

The above shows that parent involvement is essential in keeping the key stakeholders in children's formal education geared towards performing well at a task which is appreciated and considered invaluable.

### **2.3.2.4 Benefits of parent involvement to parents**

According to Hampton, Mumford and Dawne (1998:412), parent involvement has some advantages for parents themselves in that:

*Parent involvement at school helps to improve parental skills; ... Well-orchestrated workshops that teach parenting skills will help parents reinforce instruction at home and develop a conducive environment that facilitates achievement.*

Lemmerand Van Wyk (1996:6) state that the benefits parents obtain from being involved in their children's education include: increased self-esteem, better skills in teaching their children and decreased feelings of isolation.

Jantjies (1995:295) identifies the advantages of parent involvement to parents as:

*Actualisation of parental potential, development of parents' strengths and talents, greater understanding of involvement procedures as well as realising the nature of contributions they can make in the best interests of their children, the school and the community.*

Davies (1993:206) names the benefits of parent involvement to parents as follows:

*greater appreciation of their important roles; strengthened social networks; access to information and materials; personal efficiency and the motivation to continue their own education.*

Van Wyk (1996:7) argues that "when parents understand the problems of their children at school, parents are in a position to work with the school in resolving them as well as regarding other school related issues". Shartrand, Weiss, Keider and Lopez (1997:80) state that when teachers work in partnership with parents, the self-esteem of parents that is developed makes them feel valued.

The views provided in this section suggest that parents also benefit from being involved in the formal education of their children makes parents gain a better understanding of how their children learn and therefore enable them to assist their children with school work. Hampton and Mumford (1998:412) concur with Lemmer and Van Wyk (1996:6) when they assert that parent involvement improves parental skills for teaching their children.



### **2.3.2.5 Benefits of parent involvement to the community**

The meaningfulness of the relationship between the school and the community in terms of parent involvement finds expression in literature on parent involvement. Parent involvement improves school and community relations by bringing about a mutual understanding between the school and community in terms of formal and informal curricular issues (Heystek 2003:126) and a shared appreciation of new resources and programmes that would improve the teaching of the curriculum (Glanz 2006:56). According to Lockhead and Levin (1993:118) community involvement is vital for attaining the ideal of effective schools. As such, a community should be encouraged to contribute to local schools through monetary and voluntary participation. If the community is involved in running school activities, the school will be guaranteed of its continued support since the community will feel to be part and parcel of the school. A view that is not often portrayed in terms of parent involvement is that the community also benefits from parent involvement. In this regard Davies (1993:206) indicates that “parental and community participation in the schools can also contribute to advancing the prospects of a more democratic and equitable society”. He further comments on the relationship between school and community by saying that “increased links between schools and community have shown multiple positive results such as: increased access to schools and facilities; cost saving and improved services through collaboration and community pride.”

An advantage of parent involvement for the community is that when the family and the school team up, the school becomes a potent force in the community in promoting healthy holistic development of all of its children. In this regard Booth and Dun (1996:46) argue that “schools need to encourage the parents to broaden their spheres of activities so that parents become catalysts for change in the school and the community and informed advocates for their children”. Furthermore, when communication between the community and school is improved, parents participate in school events and act as volunteers in the academic and extra-curricular activities of the school (Seyfried & Chung (2002:78).

The above information shows that parent involvement is beneficial to the community. Parent involvement would encourage communities to be united. Parents working together would develop schools, thereby improving the community.

## **2.4 LITERATURE STUDY RELATING TO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF THIS STUDY**

As mentioned in Section 1.9, the literature study discloses information which is considered as theoretical frameworks for this study. Epstein's theory, especially her typology of parent involvement and the overlapping spheres of influence on parent involvement, as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, are discussed in this chapter. It was decided to discuss Epstein's theories concerning parent involvement before focusing on the scope of parent involvement often portrayed in literature since they offer a comprehensive view of parent involvement with schools which also includes the participation of the community with school and parents in terms of the scope of parent involvement. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is presented at the end of the chapter since it encaptures a very broad view which encompasses many topics in various fields of study, which would also include parent involvement. The discussion of the mentioned theoretical frameworks are important since they would relate to the views of this study's participants' on the concept of parent involvement and problems experienced with parent involvement which concern the management of parent involvement (see Sections 1.3; 1.4; 4.3.1), as well as recommendations provided to improve the management of parent involvement at the selected schools (see Section 5.4.1). During the researcher's teaching at schools and serving on an SGB the role of the community was not accentuated and this study has made him cognisant of its importance in terms of parent involvement and the management thereof.

### **2.4.1 Epstein's theories concerning parent involvement**

Epstein is most known for her framework known as the overlapping spheres of influence that asserts that effective families and schools have overlapping shared goals and missions relating to learners' education which, as shall be shown, should be extended to the community so that parent involvement should not only be seen in terms of interaction between parents and the school but as a tripartite cooperation between parents, school and community. The theory of overlapping spheres of influence and her complementary typology of parent involvement, which include the participation of the community, bear relation to this study as mentioned in the above introduction, constitute the focal point of this discussion. The typology of parent involvement mainly focuses on what interaction between home and school should characterise parent involvement though they do not address how the boundaries between school and families should be removed.

According to Epstein (1995: 701-702) teachers usually view the relationship between schools and parents in terms of three underlying perspectives: separate responsibilities of families and schools, shared responsibilities of families and schools, and sequential responsibilities of families and schools. These constitute what could possibly be called her initial theoretical model which explains parent involvement. It also relates to this study since its first perspective focuses on parent involvement that has not evolved much, as seems to be the case in South Africa – a situation which needs managerial intervention.

#### **2.4.1.1 Epstein's initial theoretical model of parent involvement**

This model preceded Epstein's theoretical framework of overlapping spheres of influence and her complimentary typology of parent involvement. In all probability it laid the foundation for her theory on overlapping spheres and her typology of parent involvement. It consists of three components.

- **Separate responsibilities of families and schools**

According to this perspective, schools emphasise clearly different tasks of role players in learners' education. This means that teachers maintain a professional distance from parents, while the latter bring up their children at home. Epstein (1987:121) posits that teachers and parents think that their distinct roles best be kept separately and independently so as to reduce conflict, competition and incompatibility between them. Epstein (1995:701-702) is of the opinion that if schools merely view pupils as students, they are likely to see parents as people being separated from schools who should leave the child to the school in terms of their formal education.

- **Shared responsibilities of families and schools**

The shared responsibility perspective of families and schools encourages cooperation between them. Epstein (1987:121) concurs that both share the responsibility of socialising the child since teachers and parents work together, each recognising their shared interest in and duty of building better programmes and opportunities for learners. When teachers see pupils as children, they could be more likely to see the families and community as partners in educating them, and hence promote shared responsibilities. This would suggest the promotion of the overlapping spheres of influence in terms of the school and the home (Epstein 1995:701-702), which later found expression in Epstein's

comprehensive tripartite view of parent involvement in terms of overlapping spheres of influence (see Section 2.4.1.2).

- **Sequential responsibilities of families and schools**

According to Epstein (1995:701-702), the sequence of responsibilities of the family and the school implies two critical phases of parents' and teachers' contributions to the child's development. Parents teach the needed social skills to children during socialisation at home until their formal education commences at the age of five or six. Teachers then take the primary role for children's education as the latter now becomes, for the most part, the responsibility of the school. This approach shows a close relationship to the separate responsibilities of families and schools.

#### **2.4.1.2 The theory of overlapping spheres of influence**

In the 1980's Epstein (1996:214) started developing a theoretical perspective called the "overlapping spheres of influence" based on data collected from teachers, parents and students. This was based on a social organisational perspective with the view that many efficient families and schools have overlapping, shared goals and a common mission regarding children, and therefore carry out some of their tasks collaboratively. As alluded to in the previous section, a third sphere of influence, the community, was added.

As shown, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence recognises that there are three major contexts in which learners learn and grow, namely the family, the school and community. The model locates the learners at the centre of the interaction between families and school. Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon (1997:3) indicate that this is so because "the inarguable facts are that students are the main actors in their education, development and success in schools".

School, family and community partnerships do not automatically produce successful learners. Rather, partnership activities should be developed to engage, guide, energise, and motivate learners to produce their own success (Epstein et al. 1997:3). Epstein et al. (1997:3) assume that if children feel cared for and are motivated to work hard at their role of learners, they would do their best to learn to write, read, calculate, learn other skills, develop yet unearthed talents, and remain in school.

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence implies that learners are crucial for the success of school, family and community partnerships. This is so, not only because learners constitute key components around which interaction between the three spheres takes place, but also because learners are often their parents' main source of information about their schools (Epstein et al. 1997:3). According to Epstein (1987:130) the assumption of the theory of overlapping spheres of influence is that there are common interests of families and schools that are to a greater and lesser extent promoted by policies and programmes of organisations in the community, as well as the actions and attitudes of individuals in the community's organisations. Epstein (1987:131) also posits that when teachers and parents stick to their shared responsibilities, they support the generation of skills needed by both teachers and parents to produce educated and successful learners. Their combined labour pushes the spheres of family and school influences together, increases communication between parents and school personnel that concerns the developing child, and creates school like families and family like schools.

The community as a sphere of influence, in conjunction with groups of parents, creates school-like opportunities, events and programmes that reinforce, recognise, and reward learners for good progress, creativity, and excellence (Epstein 1995:702). Communities also create family-like settings, services and functions to enable families to increase support for their children. Community-minded families and students help their neighbourhood and other families. Combined efforts help children experience learning and caring from and for communities. The ideal partnership would be when all the three spheres, namely school, family and community develop comprehensive partnership programmes (Epstein & Sheldon 2006: online).

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence recognises that while some practices of the family and the school are different, others are shared tasks of both parents and teachers. If parents and teachers support the viewpoint of separate responsibilities and stick to their specialised skills, the respective spheres of the family and the school are separated from each other; thus the two work independently. Conversely, if the teacher and the parent uphold their shared responsibilities and combine skills, they facilitate the creation of better and successful learners.

According to Van Wyk, (2008:13) the theory of overlapping spheres of influence implies that the extent of overlap between family, school and community may vary and that it can be increased or decreased according to the actual practices of teachers, parents and children. According to Van Zyl

(2013:229) two or three spheres may interact and the unfortunate situation that none of the spheres overlap is also a possibility.

Communities can create school-like opportunities and programmes that recognise and encourage the development of learners' creativity and excellence. However, the possibility exists that schools which are academically excellent and communities that tend to focus mainly on promoting learner performance at schools could lead to non-interactive gaps between teachers, parents and community in terms of learners who do not perform well which negatively affect their intellectual development. In a caring school community, the stakeholders work tirelessly to improve partnerships through establishing trust and mutual respect which are required for solving problems (Brown & Duku 2008:410).

There are various reasons for having school, family and community partnerships. According to Epstein (1995:703), partnerships can improve the running of school programmes, school climate, provision of family services, and support parent skills, leadership and relations between families, school and the community, as well as motivate teachers to do their work better. However, the main reason would be to help all learners to succeed in school and their subsequent careers in life. When pupils, parents, teachers and community members view each other as partners in education, everybody benefits (Frielinghaus (2005:12).

Brown and Duku (2008:410) observed that schools in many instances adapt their family and community involvement programmes and practices in line with the needs and interests, time and talents, and ages and grade levels of its learners. According to Epstein (1995:705) commonalities that have been identified across successful partnership programmes at schools include an emphasis on promoting opportunities which would advance the overlapping spheres of influence of schools, families, communities, as well as having an *Action Team for Partnerships* (ATP) to organise each school's work and progress in terms of family and community involvement. Community involvement would mean that community leaders plan and execute their support to learners' learning processes.

The following section, which examines Epstein's typology of parent involvement, also relates to Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres.

### 2.4.1.3 Epstein's typology of parent involvement

Parent involvement encompasses various different responsibilities and roles. In this regard Epstein (2001: 408-410) identified six different types of parent involvement which constitute a number of roles that parents and schools can play that concern children's education. These roles should not be viewed in isolation from each other.

- **Type 1: Parenting**

According to Epstein (2001:408-410) parenting implies that the school should support all families with parenting and childrearing skills, an understanding of the child's and adolescent's development, and the establishment of home environments which support children as learners. This should be done by means of workshops and meetings where families can share information with schools about their culture, background, children's needs and talents that relate to the child's success at school (Epstein 1995:704; Epstein 2008:11-12; Epstein & Sanders 2006:52). Establishing effective parenting, however, is not an easy task. In this regard, Chavkin (1989:277) states that parents with less than a high school education are twice more likely to feel awkward when considering approaching school personnel than parents with higher levels of education. It is therefore recommended that school staff welcome parents and that the institutional structure of the school be made more inviting when parents attend workshops and meetings. Aaronson, Carter and Howell (1995:58) emphasise the need for a hospitable climate in order for parents to feel welcome. They concur with Moles (1993:34) and states that if the first time many parents hear from the school is when a problem arises, the establishment of a negative association with school involvement is inevitable. Patsy (1994:39) with whom Blatchford (1994:12) concurs, states that although working with non-English speaking parents in the USA may be difficult, a friendly smile and atmosphere could make parents more at ease and result in parents talking openly about their feelings.

Monadjem (2003:28) is of the opinion that parenting includes parents' supervision and provision of a home environment conducive for children to become responsible, self-confident, self-reliant persons with socially acceptable behaviour. Schools can encourage parental involvement by organizing programmes that provide family support to help families with relevant child rearing skills, which relate to, inter alia, health and nutrition conditions that assist learning at every stage and grade level. Of course, the most basic involvement of parents is meeting children's need for food, clothing, shelter and medical care (Bridgemohan, 2001:21). Home visits help families of learners to

understand the functioning of schools and enable schools to comprehend factors at home that influence learning (Epstein & Sheldon, 2005:7). Schools could provide assistance to parents by means of documents, workshops, discussion groups, videotapes and class. Schools should show respect for the diversity of cultures, beliefs, values, family needs and goals (*Project Appleseed* 2008:6).

To help families to share information about their culture and children's talent and needs with schools, all information for and from families has to be clear and if possible, linked to children's performance at school (Epstein, 1995:705). Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) identified the following benefits of parenting for learners, parents and teachers as follows:

- \* For learners: Respect for parents is created by means of the establishment of awareness that family supervision is ongoing; consequently positive personal qualities, behaviour, beliefs and family values are developed; time management in terms of home chores, homework and other activities improve; and an awareness of the importance of school is established which, in turn, improves school attendance.
- \* For parents: Parents' awareness of their own and other parents' challenges pertaining to parenting is increased. Parents experience support from the school and other parents which generates confidence and parents' understanding of parenting, child and adolescent development, and conditions suitable for learning are improved.
- \* For teachers: Teachers gain an understanding of families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs and views of their learners. Similar benefits have been identified by other researchers on parenting programmes.

The *Australian Council of State Schools' Organisation* (ACSSO 2006:6) observed that improving the home environment increased pupils' school achievement, parents' confidence to consult with teachers, as well as their understanding of their children. Improved home environments result in closer relationships between parents and teachers. Haack (2007:11) relates to these findings when he says, that "parent involvement results in parents becoming aware of what teachers do, what children are learning and how the school functions". Sustained improvement in the home environment has lasting effects (Project Appleseed 2008:7). Monadjem's (2003:30) view that a positive parenting



style is important for children's reading achievement as it reduces learning difficulties, further validates the importance of parenting.

- **Type II: Communication**

According to Epstein (1995:704) schools and families should communicate about school programmes and learners' progress by means of school to home and home to school communication by means of printed communication and other means which take parents who do not speak English, or/and those who are illiterate, into account. She states that communication between home and school should include the development of effective manners of communication between home and schools concerning school programmes and learners' progress. Such action could play significant roles in connecting schools, families, and communities. Garca-Lubeck (in Chavkin 1989:283) recommends that letters to parents should be written in more than one language and that key educational terms should be translated into minority languages. Tam and Chan (2009:81) confirms that "open communication between parents and teachers can help parents feel at ease about receiving needed help with their children's academic work".

According to Barta and Winn (1996:29) newsletters could be used to inform parents of annual schedules for school events. Letters could include notices of upcoming cultural events at the school, as well as information geared towards educating parents concerning their important share in their children's formal education. Davis (1989:22), who conducted a successful parent involvement programme at the *Ralph Waldo Emerson School* in California, points out that the key to parent involvement is appropriate and constant communication. When communication between the home and school occurs on a regular basis, parents feel more comfortable coming to school to share ideas, voice their concerns with the school staff, and respond positively to requests (Williams & Chavkin 1989:20).

Educators can also visit their learners' homes. Short home visits introduce educators to the world of learners. Brown and Martin (1996:18) state that even when educators and parents do not share the same home language, educators are usually welcomed into parents' homes; that home visits increase an understanding of parents' attitudes to schooling, their traditions and beliefs; and that home visits reveal ways in which minority parents can become involved in school activities.

According to Nistler and Angela (2000) (in McNeil & Patin (2005:4), ineffective communication, especially a lack of clear, straightforward and helpful information, is the major reason for a lack of parent involvement. Haack (2007:45) concurs by stating that if a school principal is not aware of the procedures to be put in place for communication to flow from school to family and from family to school, an inviting school climate may not prevail.

Epstein and Sheldon (2005:5) found that most of the communication that occurs between parents and schools is directed from the school to parents. According to them, such communication usually takes place when children experience behavioural or learning problems. At times, however, parents contact teachers when teachers have shown interest in helping their children (Epstein and Sheldon (2005:5). In addition, a survey conducted by Letsholo (2006:4) in the United States showed that most parents neither communicated with the school for a year, nor attended meetings with teachers.

The necessity for improving and maintaining parent involvement through the development of a shared programme of effective communication is essential for providing a variety of opportunities for involvement which would remove barriers to involvement and increase parents' awareness of their children's potential (Van Zyl 2013:239). Bridgemohan (2000:31) suggests that most schools use written communication with parents even though, according to her, written information does seldom do much in increasing parents' comprehension of what actually happens in the classroom. She also asserts the view held by Pate and Andrews (2006:98) which emphasises the importance of communication by stating that parent involvement involves commitment to consistent communication between home and school about pupils' progress. This view is also held by Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki and Mindnich (2008:2) who also considers communication as being central to parent involvement.

- **Type III: Volunteering**

A volunteer for the purpose of this study is a parent who voluntarily supports the school goals which include children's learning and development. Epstein (2001: 408-410) asserts that schools should improve recruitment, training and schedules to involve parents as volunteers at schools or at other locations to support and improve learner and school programmes. According to her, flexible schedules should be provided for volunteers, enabling those who are employed to also take part. Schools should recognize volunteering efforts of productive parents.

Volunteering, according to Monadjem (2003:32), aims at obtaining and organising parent support in helping teachers in the classroom, during educational tours, during fundraising activities and in the library. According to her parents can also render valuable services in the cafeteria. The selection of volunteers and the talents of parents that could be utilised towards their children's success at school, as well as the times when they are available, should be conducted by means of a survey.

The benefits associated with volunteering, according to Epstein (1997:10), are:

- \* Learners develop knowledge, skills and talents which are linked to the professions and contributions of parent volunteers. Learners acquire skills in communicating with adults, which is vital for a future life in society.
- \* Parents gain insight into the teacher's job and become more comfortable in interacting with the school and carrying over school activities at home. They become confident in their potential to work at school and with their learners, gain specific skills, and take actions towards improving their own education. Parents also experience the satisfaction of being recognised and welcomed at school.
- \* Teachers gain much from parent involvement. Teachers are enabled to involve volunteer parents in new ways and these parents' talents and interests motivate non-volunteer parents to provide more individual attention to their learner children. Ma (1999:75) posits that the presence of parent volunteers in the classroom results in positive learner performance. This view is supported by Lemmer (2007:73) who reported that learners whose parents volunteered showed lower incidents of truancy and tardiness, and that they obtained slightly higher grades than learners whose parents did not attend school events.

- **Type IV: Learning at home**

Epstein (2001:409) posits that proper learning at home implies the provision of information and ideas to families on helping learners with their homework and other curriculum related activities, including planning and decisions in this regard. At the same time, parents must understand the school set-up in order to assist their children in learning at home. In this regard Garca-Lubeck (in Chavkin 1989:282) emphasizes that minority parents must be helped to interpret the school calendar, school

schedule, roles of staff, attendance rules, curriculum requirements, procedures relating to participation in clubs, the benefits and responsibilities of extracurricular activities, the homework policy, as well as rules that relate to the closing of schools for holidays. Learning at home relates to the important role of communication, which as shown, is not always effective (see Section 2.2.3). Too often invitations to parents related to schoolwork are couched in educational jargon, big words and lengthy prose (Moles 1993:34).

Epstein and Sheldon (2005:7) suggest that schools put the type of parent involvement under discussion into practice by providing relevant information to families concerning skills needed by learners for each subject. This involves the manner in which parents should handle fundamental duties such as assisting the child in getting ready for school, discussing and monitoring school work at home, reading to the child, coaching the child in specific skills, buying stationery, organising times for study and recreation, and assisting the child in the library (Epstein & Sheldon, 2005:7). These activities can often be organised and arranged by parents without teachers' assistance. Schedules of activities to be conducted by parents and learners at home in subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Reading could also be provided. The problems that schools may encounter in the implementation of "learning at home" as a type of parent involvement, include the designing and organising of regular weekly or monthly programmes of interactive homework that require learners to discuss important aspects that relate to their school subjects with their parents; and keeping parents informed of the content of learners' class work. How to involve parents in vital curricular issues and coordinating family linked homework activities designed by several teachers require serious consideration by schools (Epstein et al. 2005:7).

The benefits of implementing learning at home, according to *Project Appleseed* (2008:8), are that learners are enabled to complete homework, develop positive attitudes with regards to schoolwork, gain confidence in their abilities as learners, and improve their skills and test results. They come to view their parents as real teachers and their homes as learning areas associated with their schools. Children become intensely aware that they are learners and gain an appreciation of parents' teaching skills which enable them to conduct meaningful discussions at school and at home. An awareness of their duty of sharing schoolwork with their parents at home and the link between learning content and real life situations are developed. According to *Project Appleseed* (2008:8), parents' comprehension of the instructional programme of their children's subjects motivates them to provide necessary support to learners at home.

DePlanty, Coulter-Kern and Duchane (2007:361) assert that parent involvement in terms of academic endeavors at home is considered by parents to be more important than their involvement at school since it promotes academic achievement. In the same token, the *Australian Council of State Schools' Organisation*(ACSSO) (2006:4) posits that parent involvement relating to learning at home in terms of literacy and numeracy during primary school years is very likely to positively influence learners' performance at school and improve their attitudes with regards to learning, aspects which parents welcome. Desimone (1999:23) indicates that home discussions on school matters bears the strongest link with academic achievement, while volunteering at school has little effect on academic performance. Moreover, according to him, active parental involvement in terms of learning at home has a stronger impact on academic achievement than the mere monitoring of homework and supervision of learning.

Parent involvement in well-designed interactive home learning activities improves learners' learning behavior and their performance in and enthusiasm for school subjects regardless of the family's cultural background (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:187-189). According to Fishel and Ramirez (2005:371) learners benefit most when their parents serve as teachers in helping them at home, since this contributes significantly to their skills and knowledge. In addition, Bryman (2004:62) notes that students' improved academic performance resulting from parents' involvement in learning at home results in an increase of parents' confidence in and enthusiasm for facilitating learning at home.

- **Type V: Decision-making**

Decision-making implies a process of working together and sharing ideas and actions towards common goals. Decision-making aims to involve parents in school decisions (Epstein & Sheldon, 2005:8). According to Van Wyk (2008:17) parents should be included as participants in school decisions in terms of school governance and advocacy activities in committees, councils and parent organisations. Decision-making functions have to include parent leaders across racial, ethnic and socio-economic borders.

Naidoo (2005:37) explains that parents may participate in parent advisory committees, serve as school board members, be included in local school improvement councils, and act as active members of parent teacher associations. In these capacities parents are able to participate in goal setting, the drawing up and implementing programme activities, evaluating, decision-making with personnel, and drawing up budgets for school programmes.

Naidoo (2005:36) indicates that getting parents involved in programmes relating to, inter alia, parent teacher conferences, school activities, volunteering work in classrooms and teaching children at home, encourage parents to actively participate in decision-making at their children's schools. Parents who understand instructional programmes and school structures and obtain educational knowledge and experience from working with teachers, gain credibility from teachers which allow them to move into decision-making roles.

Schools geared towards efficiency should set up networks linking all families with parent representatives (*Project Appleseed* 2008:9). Schools have to start active parent teacher associations/organisations (PTAs/PTOs) and school advisory committees aimed at improved parent participation. Schools have to start independent advisory bodies with the advisory capacity to advance and work for school reform and improvement at district level, as well as committees for community and family involvement. In addition, *Project Appleseed*, (2008:9) states that it is of paramount importance for schools to involve parent leaders from all racial, political, ethnic, socio-economic and other groupings in school related activities and to train them as leaders representing other parents. The benefits of effectively involving parents in decision-making, according to *Project Appleseed* (2008:9), include the following:

- \* Learners become aware that their parents contribute in making school decisions and that their rights are protected. They gain specific benefits linked to policies which their parents dealt with during the decision-making process. Parents, on the other hand, experience that their contribution in establishing school policies that affect their children's education is valued and take ownership of certain school activities. Parents who realise the importance of their input in school decisions are able to share their experiences and network with other families, and are aware of school, district and state policies.
- \* Involving parents in school decisions enables teachers to understand and incorporate parental perspectives into policy development. Equality in terms of the legal position of family representatives in committees and leadership roles becomes well-established when parents are involved in school decisions (*Project Appleseed* 2008:7).

McKenna and Willms (1998:23) note that parents who participate in decision-making obtain a greater feeling of ownership of the school and are more acquainted with other parents. They have a

better understanding of the school's educational policies. According to them these parent have insight into the needs of the learners, school policies and curricular practices geared towards improving both learners' feelings about the school and learning outcomes.

Shatkin and Gershberg (2007:582) assert that parents who are actively involved in school decision-making bring improvement pertaining to school achievements, school/family relationships and the efficiency of community development. Naidoo (2005:37) observes that actively participating parents contribute meaningfully to decisions concerning the school budget, school policies and school programmes. According to Cotton and Wiklund (2001:8), their literature study on parent involvement in the USA indicates that parents would like to take a more active part in school decision-making.

- **Type VI: Collaboration with the community**

Epstein (2001:408-410) views collaboration with the community as recognising and combining resources and co-services from the community to support and strengthen school programmes and family practices with the view to advance children's learning and development. According to her the neighbourhoods of a community can influence the learning and development of children, as well as those in the community who are involved in and are affected by the nature and quality of education. Schools should coordinate relevant work and resources of the businesses, higher education institutions and other groups in strengthening school programmes concerning family practices and learners' learning and development.

According to Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8) and Van Wyk (2008:17) collaboration with the community which includes the recognition and integration of the services of the community in terms of particular resources and services provided by, for example, businesses and higher education institutions, results in the development of stronger school programmes and educational practices in the family which benefit children's learning and development. Accordingly, schools are required to provide information to learners and parents concerning community health, recreation, social support and cultural and other relevant issues by means of programmes of relevant community activities. Summer programmes for learners and service integration between schools and businesses and other organisations with which schools have established partnerships, would fall within the ambit of community service. In addition, schools should organise services for families presented by students in the community in various fields such as art, music and drama.

Epstein and Sheldon (2005:8-9) list the benefits linked to collaboration with the community as follows:

- \* Learners gain improved skills and talents through enriched curricular and co-curricular experiences. Learners understand the opportunities available for future careers which relate to the prospects for future education and work. Learners gain specific benefits associated with programmes, services, resources and opportunities that link them with the community. They take pride in their community and they also provide their own services to the community.
- \* Parents gain knowledge and use local resources to increase their skills and talents. Parents have opportunities to mix with other families during community activities and take pride in contributing to the community. Parents become aware of the school's contribution to the community and the community's reciprocal support of schools.
- \* Teachers' awareness of community resources that enrich the curriculum and teaching is raised. Teachers are enabled to use the services of mentors, resource providers, business partners, community volunteers and others to assist learners in learning and teaching practices. *Project Appleseed* (2008:4) asserts that teachers are enabled to make referrals of children and families to relevant services that are needed, and that teachers take pride in their involvement with the community.

Monadjem (2003:41) observed that the success in improving the school depends on the support obtained from the community since its influence is intertwined with families, churches, local businesses, volunteer organisations and neighbourhood communities. Accordingly, communities have a powerful influence on children's development through the raising of funds, advocacy services for children's rights, provision of learning opportunities outside school, general social support, neighbourhood clean-ups and recreational, social and health services which obtain aid from organisations in the community (McKenna & Willms, 1998:35). Doyle and Slotnik (2006:30) assert that schools collaborating with families by means of continuous communication provide various opportunities that help eliminate barriers between the community and the school since it results in support to youths given in or outside school walls.



Brown and Beckett (2007:499) state that community connectedness increase constructive results for young adolescents. These include better grades, improved peer relationships and the acquirement of conflict resolution and leadership skills. They further note that community based extra-curricular programmes which include sport activities and apprenticeships, improve young children's sense of belonging to the communities in which they live. Epstein (1995) (in Monadjem 2003:40) points out that the participation of families with schools induces the overlapping spheres of influence between the home, school and the community.

## **2.5 SCOPE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

According to Van Wyk's (2008:17) early views on parent involvement, it varies from a point where parents display an interest in the formal education of their children to a point where parents have a voice in the running of the school by means of school governing bodies. However, as shown, parent involvement should no longer be seen only in terms of the relationship and interaction between schools and parents but also in terms the tripartite alliance between school, home and community (Lemmer & Van Wyk 1996:16; Van Wyk 2008:13). Nevertheless, parent involvement in South Africa is mostly viewed only in terms of school and parents since the accentuation of parent involvement in the formal education of learners is relatively new in South Africa since parent involvement was only emphasised since the country's liberation (see Section 2.2.2). In the early 1990's Squelch and Lemmer (1994:93) considered the scope of parent involvement as the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school based and home based activities which ranged from supporting and upholding the school ethos to supervising learners' homework at home.

According to Vandegrift and Greene (1992:57-59) (in Van Zyl 2013:233) parent involvement, in terms of school and parents only, has four variations as shown in Table 2.1. These are based on their premise that the degree of parent involvement in terms of school and parents can be determined in terms of parental support of children's education, as well as activity of parents in terms of observable actions relating clearly to children's formal education. Support could, inter alia, take on the form of encouraging children and taking care of children's wellbeing. Activity would refer to actions such as assisting children with homework and attending school meetings. Ideal parent involvement in terms of school and parents only, implies parents who support as well as participate in their children's formal education by means of observable behaviour. In this regard Vandegrift and Greene (1992) (in Van Zyl 2013:233) distinguish between four types of parents as shown in the table below.

**Table 2.1 Types of parents**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Parents <b>support</b> their children's formal education (e.g. understanding and encouraging)</li> <li>+ Parents <b>are active</b> participants in their children's formal education (e.g. supervision of homework)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents <b>do not support</b> their children's formal education (e.g. they do not show interest in children's formal education)</li> <li>+ Parents <b>are active</b> participants in their children's formal education (e.g. attendance of parents' evenings at school)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Parents <b>support</b> their children's formal education (e.g. care for children's wellbeing by seeing that appropriate breaks are built into children's study programme)</li> <li>- Parents <b>are inactive</b> in terms of participation in their children's formal education (e.g. do not attend parents' evenings at school)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents <b>do not support</b> their children's formal education (e.g. ignores everything that has to do with children's formal education at home)</li> <li>- Parents <b>are inactive</b> in terms of participation in their children's formal education (e.g. ignore all communication from the school)</li> </ul>

Over a period of ten years Van Zyl (2013:233) found, without exception, that the majority of BED (Honours) students at the University of South Africa who attended group discussions believed that parents at their schools belonged to the least favourable, non-supporting and inactive type.

## **2.6 CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS RELATED TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Despite the fact that parent involvement in their children's education has many advantages for parents, teachers, learners, schools, and the community (see Section 2.3.2), there are serious challenges and problems related to parent involvement. Parent involvement, which still finds itself in relatively early stages of development in South Africa, is faced with various problems. Van Zyl (2013:234) identified two main reasons for parent non-involvement from parents' perspectives, namely physical hindrances and mind-centred hindrances. These and the lack of facilitation of parent involvement are discussed in this section.

### **2.6.1 Physical hindrances**

Van Zyl (2013:234) notes that parents' homes and workplaces are sometimes situated far from schools and that parents experience problems in terms of transport. Based on his group discussions with students, he is of the opinion that parents do not have sufficient time and that some suffer from financial constraints.

Time seems to be a major obstacle to parent involvement in the formal education of parents' learner children. Time constraints are especially problematic for economically disadvantaged parents, because their jobs do not promote flexibility in terms of office hours that is characteristic of professional occupations (Burns and McClure 1993; U.S. Department of Education 1994: online). Shartrand, Weiss, Keider and Lopez (1997:9) state that dual-income families are less involved in the education of learners because they have less time to spend on being involved with their children's formal education. In the same vein, Lemmer and Van Wyk (1996:9) indicate that especially single parents experience time constraints. Comer and Haynes (1991:274) relate that it is difficult to get parents involved in school management and planning because many work during the hours when meetings with parents take place. Parents who are faced with time constraints, long distance from schools and financial problems would either not participate in parent involvement or not engage optimally (Lemmer and Van Wyk 1996:9).

### **2.6.2 Mind-centered hindrances**

Another challenge, according to Van Zyl (2013:234), is that parents who lack confidence and experience inadequacy when communicating with teachers due to difficulty in expressing themselves in a language other than their home language, hinder parents from engaging with schools. Many parents believe that formal education is not their domain, and parents who do not believe that they could contribute in assisting children with schoolwork, likewise, do not engage in parent involvement.

Barriers to parent involvement identified by Lemmer and Van Wyk (1996:9) shows much similarity to the reasons presented above. According to them key reasons for lack of parent involvements are:

- inability to communicate effectively with English speaking teachers,
- inadequate education,

- negative experiences at schools that prevent parents revisit the school,
- uncertainty about the manner in which to develop their children's knowledge and skills.

Concerning negative experiences undergone by parents at school and parental inadequacy, Mncube (2009:85) says that "illiteracy is an impediment to parent involvement". Siririka (2007:161) points out that limited parental educational experience results in the lack of relevant skills to help children at home. This reason for inadequate parental involvement is supported by Van Wyk (1996:98) who posits that parents lack interest and commitment due to a lack of knowledge and skills.

Riley (1994:17) argues that "parents sometimes feel intimidated by school principals, staff or teachers, and that they feel that they lack the expertise to help children with their school work". Dodd (1995:98) concurs by stating that "parents seemed to oppose some practices suggested by schools because they did not understand how they could help their children and develop the knowledge and skills they [would] need in future"(cf. Lemmer & Van Wyk 1969:9). Uncertainty about how to help children with their school work seems to constitute a major hindrance to parent involvement. Haack (2007:13) states that some parents believe that teachers and school principals judge them negatively and blame them for their children's difficulties, and do not acknowledge their contributions.

In line with mind-centred hindrances, Blatchford (1994:13) states that parents may hold negative views of educators and the schools they represent. According to him they may even be skeptical or suspicious of professionals in general, particularly in geographical areas where they perceive professionals to be dominating people who are capable of controlling their lives. This he found especially true of unemployed parents and/or those who are visited by social workers. Past experiences relating to a loss of control would make parents feel disempowered and instill a lack of self-confidence which negatively influences their inner articulation with themselves, thereby affirming their doubtfulness of their ability to nurture their children, let alone becoming actively involved in their children's formal education. In South Africa, apartheid denied many parents a basic education. Illiteracy would further discourage parents from taking an active role in their children's formal education.

### **2.6.3 Lack of facilitation of parent involvement in education**

School principals often seem not to facilitate parent involvement in their schools due to a lack of managerial skills. Ellis (1996:54) is of the view that principals need to be trained beyond the level of basic management in order to be able to facilitate parent involvement. Shartrand et al. (1997:18-19) offer the following reasons for educators' lack of encouraging parent involvement:

- \* Principals and educators at schools who uphold institutional cultures that do not relate to considering the views and participation of parents, may discourage family involvement due to little time spent on promoting parent involvement.
- \* Large classes may preclude involvement because educators have little time to spend with parents.
- \* Apart from the pressing demands on educators' time and energy, a lack of interest and support by management in terms of parent involvement may inhibit educators from extending themselves to family members of learners since management does not give recognition for it.

According to Aaronson, Carter and Howell (1995:58) many schools that claim to welcome parent participation fail to provide an environment which is conducive for parent involvement at school. Moles (1993:34) holds the view that schools tend to communicate with disadvantaged parents mainly when their children find themselves in some kind of trouble. This paints a negative attitude towards parent involvement by schools which would instill a negative association with the school amongst parents who, in turn, could result in their negation of parent involvement (also see Section 2.6.2).

Chavkin and Williams (1993:281) report that while there is a positive relationship between the number of written school policies encouraging parent involvement and increased parent activities at school district level, very few schools have written policies that promote parent involvement at schools.

## **2.7 STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Given the challenges obstructing adequate parent involvement, it is evident that researchers would propose strategies to alleviate their impact. In this regard Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007:85) suggest the following three leading roles that school counselors should execute:

*Cooperating with teachers in cultivating welcoming and family-centered school environments, working with teachers to link students' lives with the curriculum, and bridging together the gap between teachers and parents.*

Lombana and Lombana (1982: online) assert that

*it is of paramount importance for school counselors to work with the school teachers to get them on board. Some teachers may want parent involvement, but others may subtly discourage it or hold negative views towards involvement.*

Parhar (2006:2) alludes to the above when he says that “teachers with misguided ideologies tend to reinforce practices of exclusion in relation to uneducated and socially disadvantaged parents”.

Nye, Turner and Schwartz (2006:1) advocate the implementation of educational workshops that would equip parents with skills, abilities and materials to cooperate with their children on an academic level at home, thereby bringing about meaningful parent participation in the formal education of their children. Michael (2004:54) acknowledges that while all parents, irrespective of race or culture, have an interest in their children's education, they require guidance and support in parenting skills which may be provided at workshops.

Brown (2007:48) suggests the following strategies to increase parent involvement:

- \* Schools could host events and activities that bring parents and families to the school. For example, schools can organise music programmes or talent shows at which students perform for the community. Schools could also organise a “Community Day” at which volunteering parents can assist in activities geared towards the needs and interests of the community.
- \* Schools could offer programmes, events and activities aimed at promoting parent involvement. This can be done by organising workshops for parents regarding ways of assisting their children's learning in specific subject areas. Such engagement with parents would help them to develop strategies that would advance their children's success inside and outside the classroom. Haack (2007:48) supports this strategy when he says that “parents who do not have the skills to help with their children's school work or believe that

they could not be effective in helping them would be enlightened if workshops addressed their needs.

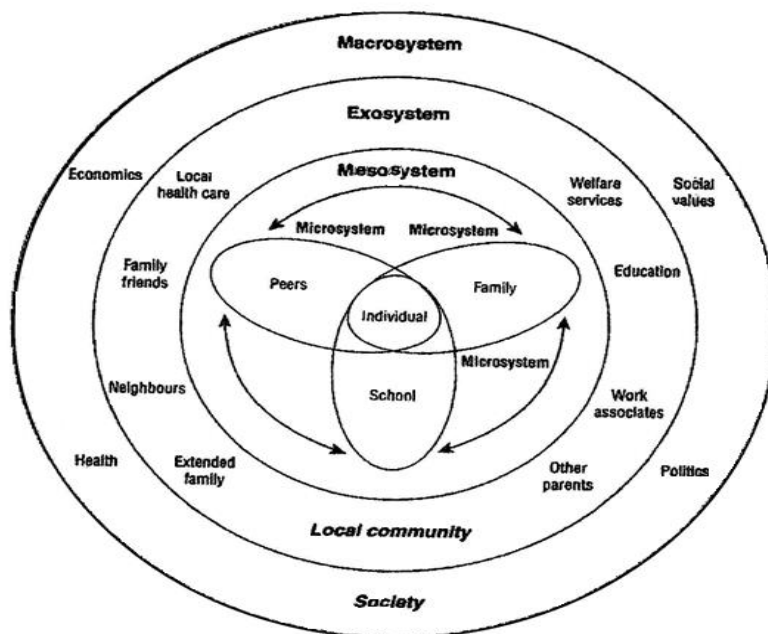
- \* Schools should communicate with parents frequently, using different methods. In order to communicate efficiently with parents, the school should use home-to-home communication methods in the best interest of individual teachers and parents. These could include mail, phone, e-mail and face-to-face meetings.
- \* Schools should create a warm, respectful and welcoming school environment. In this regard, schools should offer a warm reception for parents at the front office. Schools should encourage parents to become involved with their children`s learning.
- \* Schools should be flexible in accommodating the needs of parents and families. This can be achieved by ensuring continuous communication with parents and offering positive and constructive feedback on children`s academic progress. Schools could also conduct surveys to determine parent and student needs.

## **2.8 BRONFENBRENNER’S ECOLOGICAL MODEL AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCHING PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Bronfenbrenner’s theory looks into a child’s development within the context of relationships with his/her surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner’s theory explains complex “layers” of the environment, each having a bearing on the child in terms of her/his development. This framework is appropriate for this study as it would provide a meaningful lens for interpreting the reasons for deficiency in parent involvement of learners which has a greater influence on their development (see Section 2.4.1.4), as well as providing guidelines that concern the management of parent involvement. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model takes cognisance of the interaction between factors in the child’s immediate family/community environment, components further away in the community, and also the societal landscape that fuels and steers her/his development (see Figure 1.1). Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. To study a child’s development, one has to look not only at the child and her immediate environment, but also at the interaction with the larger environment (Bronfenbrenner 1979: 22-15).

Parent involvement in terms of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, like Epstein's typology of parents and her theory of overlapping spheres of influence allows one to view parent involvement in a holistic manner. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model embraces the micro-, exo- and macrosystem that impact on the child's development (1979:3). In terms of this study it would mean that parent involvement, a factor which influences the child's development, would also be influenced by these three systems. As mentioned, these components do not function in isolation, but interact with each other.

**Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner' Ecological Model**



(Source: Landsberg, Kruger and Nel 2005:11)

Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) considers the microsystem “as a set of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics”. The microsystem which is closely related to the child is represented by components which directly influence the child, such as his/her immediate family, significant individuals such as his/her peers and teachers, as well as influential people at school. At this level, relationships have impact in two directions, both from the child and toward the child whereby the child's beliefs and behaviour are affected and whereby the child also affects the behaviour and



beliefs of other partakers, such as his parents, in the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979:22-23) calls this reciprocal interaction between the components of the microsystem mesosystemic interaction. Bi-directional influences are strong and have a great impact on the child, as would be the case if parents are involved with their children in terms of school matters. According to Cooper and Valentine (2001:145), homework completed at home provides chances for involving parents in the learning process and enhances their appreciation of education. In such instances, homework would act as a catalyst for mesosystemic interaction. (cf. Epstein 2002:9). Parent involvement and the management thereof would, however, relate to systems further removed from the child, such as the school management committee, the SGB, and provincial Departments of Education in the exosystem which would have a more indirect influence on the child, as well as the national Department of Education in the macrosystem.

The interaction between the child and the people around him/her affects her/his development in terms of relationships that are positive or negative. This indicates that the child's behaviour towards people in the microsystem would be determined by how they treat her/him. However, as shown, interactions at outer levels still impact the inner structures.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) the exosystem consists of settings "that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or is affected, by what is happening in the setting containing the developing person". The exosystem comprises factors that impact on the child's microsystem. In this regard, Bronfenbrenner (1975:25) cites parents' work places and parents' network of friends. Although the school is placed in the microsystem, since children have close associations with other learners in their class and their teachers, one would place the SGB in the exosphere as indicated. The same would apply for the local school board. The exosystem is therefore further removed from the child and has an indirect influential component. Keenan (2002:31) notes that a dysfunctional exosystem produces negative results in terms of the child's development. In terms of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, unemployment would be placed in the exosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979:24).

Bronfenbrenner (1979:26) defines the macrosystem as "consistencies in the form and content of lower order systems that exist at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief system or ideology underlying such consistencies". The microsystem and exosystem are surrounded by the macrosystem and is furthest removed from the child but would bear an indirect influence on the child's development. The microsystem, as the exosystem, would also influence

parent involvement in the microsystem which, in turn, would influence the child's development. Components relating to the macrosphere are, inter alia, economics, social values and politics which pertain to society at large (Bronfenbrenner 1979:22, 25-26; Landsberg, Kruger and Nel 2005:11). Although the factors in the macrosystem may seem to be far removed from the child, they could affect the child in the microsystem in terms of the ecological model's interconnectedness.

This study relates to an ecological perspective to examine aspects concerning parent involvement within the South African socio-cultural context to provide guidelines which concern the micro-, exo-, and macrosystem to establish a meaningful management of parent involvement. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model would, inter alia, (1979:25) have a link with parents' interaction with their children concerning homework and parent-home cooperation in the microsystem which constitute mesosystemic interaction which provides a bridge between home and school.

As mentioned, an ecological perspective acknowledges the effects of components further removed from the microsystem, including cultural norms and ideological views in the macrosystem (Seginer 2006:79). From the ecological perspective, the developmental potential of a specific setting or system is increased when there are supportive links between settings or systems such as shared goals, mutual trust, positive orientation and consensus, so that the systems can function as a harmonious network (Bronfenbrenner 1979:25). Links between the macro-, exo- and microsystem can be illustrated, inter alia, by legislation in the macrosystem which, through an act, prescribes action taken by provincial Departments of Education in the exosphere which later influences behaviour in the classroom in the microsystem. Although the school is considered dominant in the microsystem due to its direct influence on children in classrooms and playgrounds, the functioning of the SGB, in most cases, rather fits into the exosystem since it affects the child in an indirect manner. The inclusion of the community in the exosystem, in terms of this study which focuses on parent involvement and the management thereof would also be relevant (see Sections 2.4.1.2 and 2.4.1.3) since optimal parent involvement is considered as a tripartite alliance between home, school and community. One should, however, argue that the macrosystem also be considered (see Section 5.4).

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

In order to address the main research question which is aimed at bringing about a meaningful management of parent involvement at the selected schools in the Zeerust district (see Sections 1.3 and 1.4), the researcher made a study of the impediments to parent involvement in South Africa by

focusing mainly on research conducted by African researchers since it would provide insight into the views of interviewees concerning obstacles that need to be overcome. With regard to problematic issues concerning parent involvement, this researcher concluded that parent involvement in South Africa seems to find itself in an infant stage. This undesirable status of parent involvement would also apply to the management thereof.

This study's three theoretical frameworks, namely Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres and her typology of parents, as well as Bronfenbrenner's ecological model were discussed since they provide a broad basis for viewing parent involvement and the management thereof. Epstein's views imply that parents, the school and community should form a tripartite alliance and that these three role players would benefit from each other. Her views also relate to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model although his model makes provision for an even broader level which, in terms of the management of parent involvement, would include the national Department of Education (see Section 5.3). The mentioned three theoretical frameworks would allow the researcher to interpret participants' views of parent involvement that relate to the management thereof and provide a meaningful basis for providing recommendations to bring about a meaningful management of parent involvement at the selected schools.

The benefits of parent involvement were discussed since they also relate to a research question (see Section 1.3) of which the answer would influence the recommendations in terms of the improvement of the management of parent involvement at the selected schools.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlines the research design which relates to this study's methodological pillars, namely the population and sample, the selection of participants, relevant data collection methods, namely a literature study and individual and focus group interviews, data analysis and trustworthiness. In addition, it contains a discussion of aspects pertaining to ethics which were applied before implementing the research design.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

De Vos (1998:77) refers to the research design as the overall plan of conducting a research study. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:33) refer to the research design as a plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions (see Section 1.3). An overall characteristic of the research design of this study is that it constitutes a multiple case study since two units, namely two schools which have similar features (see Section 3.2.1.1) were selected to serve as basis for qualitative empirical research.

##### **3.2.1 Methodological pillars of research**

The research was based on the interpretive paradigm. It was geared by the quest to understand the phenomenon of parent involvement within a particular social and cultural context (MacMillan and Schumacher (2010:341). The interpretive paradigm allowed the researcher to investigate and interpret views concerning the perception of the concept and practice of parent involvement which would allow the researcher to provide recommendations aimed at establishing meaningful management of parent involvement in the final chapter. It made provision for the qualitative research approach which aims at gaining rich information from relevant participants (MacMillan and Schumacher 2010:341).

### **3.2.1.1 Population and sampling**

Chiromo (2006:16) views a population as “all the individuals, units, objects or events that will be considered in a research project”. The study focused on parent involvement in terms of two selected secondary schools from a total of sixteen secondary schools in the Zeerust district with information rich participants associated with them. The sixteen schools constituted the population in terms of units. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the schools. Both schools find themselves in the same social context and much information could be gained from participants from a small sample. Richness in information is a key component of purposeful sampling (Patton 1990:169; McMillan & Schumacher 2010:325-326).

Babbie (2008:179) describes purposeful sampling as “a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment about which ones will be most useful and representative”. Of the sixteen schools, two schools were purposefully selected for the study in terms of certain criteria. As mentioned, the selected schools had to be similar in terms of their socio-economic climate; they also had to be in relative close proximity from each other to ensure the manageability of research in terms of that which is required from a dissertation and keep the time frame for conducting, transcribing and analysing interviews, as well as the finances, in check. The population in terms of individuals refers to SGB chairpersons, principals, active parents, inactive parents and parent members serving in the SGBs of the sixteen schools from which a selection was made.

### **3.2.1.2 Selection of participants**

Participants consisted of the two principals of the two schools, the two SGB chairpersons, eight parents serving in each SGB, and another five active and inactive parents from each school of the two schools selected from sixteen schools.

- **Selection of schools and principals**

As mentioned, purposive sampling was chosen for selecting schools. The reason for choosing the principals was that they were the ones managing the chosen schools. As administrators working with parents they would have meaningful information on parent involvement.

- **Selection of parents**

The selection of the active and inactive parents was conducted with the help of the principals. They requested their secretaries to assist with the identification of five active and five inactive parents at each school who were available for participation in this research. Each secretary provided registers of active and inactive parents. These registers were compiled from information which occurred in other documents which indicated the names of parents involved in different activities, namely attendance at parent days and other functions at the two schools, and those who did not partake in any school functions. To select parents the researcher picked the fifth parent from the registers of active parents and inactive parents of learners in grade 8A, 9A, 10A, 11A and grade 12A to make them ten in total chosen from both registers of each school. The researcher therefore used systematic sampling to select parents. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:133) posit that “in systematic sampling every *th* element is selected from a list of all elements in the survey population, beginning with a randomly selected element”. A number from 1 to 10 was randomly selected as the starting point and every fifth name on the lists for active and inactive parents for each school was selected to make up five active and five inactive parents for each school. Systematic sampling was executed manually. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:132) the advantage of systematic sampling is its assurance that the population will be evenly sampled.

### **3.2.1.3 Qualitative research approach**

In this study the researcher adopted the qualitative research approach since it makes provision for rich description and detail concerning the particular topic of this study. This approach assisted the researcher in obtaining insight and in-depth views from the participants concerning a complicated educational issue (Chiromo 2006:27). Moreover, it provided participants enough space to voice and expresses their feelings, opinions and perceptions. According to Leedy (1997:106), qualitative research assists researchers who aim at discovering and exploring issues to build theory rather than testing it. This study was indeed geared towards adding information to the theory concerning parent involvement and the management thereof from a very particular South African perspective. However, it should be borne in mind that the literature study which informed the empirical research relates to theories developed by prominent leaders, such as Joyce Epstein, in the field of parent involvement.

Another reason for choosing the qualitative research approach was that data was obtained, as far as possible, in their natural setting. Principals and SGB members were interviewed at schools and those who were interviewed spoke from their particular experiences.

Even though this research is rooted in existing theory it was also exploratory to a certain degree. According to Seliger and Shohamy (1989:117) exploratory research is defined as “initial research into a hypothetical or theoretical idea”. Although much research was conducted on parent involvement, this study focused on parent involvement and the management thereof at selected secondary schools in terms of the Zeerust district of North West Province which have not been subjected to research on parent involvement. The researcher interrogated challenges and problems faced concerning parent involvement in terms of learners’ biological parents serving on selected school governing bodies, and other active and inactive parents, chairpersons of SGBs, as well as school principals to establish ways to improve parent involvement since it plays such an important role in learners’ development.

#### **3.2.1.4 Data collection methods**

The researcher applied a literature study and interviews.

##### **3.2.1.4.1 Literature study**

An extensive literature study, which is the starting point of all research, was conducted on parent involvement. An emphasis was placed on the work of Joyce Epstein who is well-known for her theory of the overlapping of spheres and the typology of parent involvement. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model also constituted a significant section of the literature study since it allowed the researcher to view the topic of parent involvement in a holistic manner. Attention was also paid to research of many other relevant authors. The literature study constituted an important research method since it informed the research questions and the key questions posed during the interviews.

##### **3.2.1.4.2 Interviews**

As mentioned in Section 1.7.3.2 an interview is a structured two way conversation between researcher and interviewees (Chikoko and Mhloyi 1995:30). Individual and focus group interviews were conducted face to face. The face to face interviews assisted the researcher to obtain a better

understanding of what was taking place in the schools concerning parent involvement to enable the researcher to provide meaningful recommendations that would benefit the management of parent involvement at the two selected schools. Kvale (1983:174) asserts that “face to face interviews can take its advantage of social cues such as voice, intonation and body language”. This implies that the interviewees can provide the interviewer with additional information that can be added to verbal answers of the interviewee to questions posed by the interviewer.

Another advantage of face to face interviews is that there is no significant time delay between question and answer (Wengraf 2001:194). During the interviews the researcher took notes and used a tape recorder in order to obtain accurate information.

As mentioned in Section 1.7.3.2 the interviews were used to solicit information from principals, SGB chairpersons, parents serving on the SGB and active and inactive parents in terms of their involvement with schools to establish their understanding of parent involvement, their views on the benefits of parent involvement, what they considered to be challenges and problems concerning parent involvement and how they thought parent involvement could be improved, so that recommendations concerning the management of parent involvement could be made by the researcher.

- **Individual interviews**

Individual interviews were conducted with the two principals of the two schools and the two SGB chairpersons. The advantage of individual interviews, according to Creswell (1994:50), is that it makes provision for a detailed understanding of a person’s opinion and experiences. Lofland and Lofland (1995:89), hold the view that “in-depth interviews are best conducted face to face”. The individual interviews conducted for this study cannot be termed as “in-depth” *per se* since they were semi-structured, which means that they made use of an interview guide. They nevertheless leaned towards being “in-depth”, even if not by name, since follow up questions were used if clarification of interviewees’ answers were required (Bryman 2004:52). The interview guides consisted of key questions asked during the interviews. During individual interviews, as well as focus group interviews, the researcher made sure not to reveal what he thought about a particular issue and listened careful to what participants had to say. Patton (1990:430) states that the key to be a good interviewer is to be a good listener and questioner.



The use of individual interviews, as described, permitted the researcher to explore relevant aspects pertaining to parent involvement extensively, with the result that new insights were yielded which informed the recommendations. The individual interviews were time-consuming and led to much information which took long to transcribe.

- **Focus group interviews**

For each of the two schools a separate focus group interviews were conducted with parents serving in the SGB and five active parents and five inactive parents in terms of their involvement with schools in order to establish their understanding of parent involvement, the ways in which parents should be involved, parent involvement's benefits and challenges, as well as what parents think can be done to improve parent involvement. As mentioned, the participants were chosen because they were knowledgeable in terms of the topic under investigation. Patton (2002:420) asserts that participants are usually a relatively homogeneous group of people. Eight members serving in the SGB of each school, who had been working together for some time for a common goal, were chosen purposively for two focus group interviews because they would have much to share with the interviewer and each other. The participants were mixed in terms of gender and stereotyping therefore did not occur. The numbers of the focus group participants made it possible to control and manage the group. Hoberg (1999:93) notes that focus group interviews have a potential to yield a wide range of responses. This potential realised itself during the interviews and assisted the researcher to gain a better understanding of parent involvement at the selected schools. Patton's (2002:440) view that "qualitative research usually generates voluminous data" relates to that of Hoberg.

Since the researcher used an interview guide as an instrument to guide the focus group interview, they could be termed semi-structured interviews. Questions were ordered in such a way that they started from the general to the more specific. In order to maintain order during the focus group interviews, the purpose of the interview was clearly outlined and some basic rules were set which would not dampen interaction. Permission was obtained from the participants to audiotape the interview and to make notes.

### **3.2.1.5 Data analysis**

Data analysis involves the interpretation of events and responses of participants. To make data analysis possible the taped interviews were transcribed. As mentioned in Section 1.7.4, MacMillan

and Schumacher (2010:109) qualifies qualitative data analysis primarily as an inductive process of arranging data into different categories and identifying patterns and similarities among them whereas Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006:76) considers the essence of data analysis to be an attempt by the researcher to summarise collected data in a dependable and accurate manner. As shown in Section 1.7.4, data analysis requires giving meaning to the views of participants in terms of categories.

In line with the view of Corbin and Strauss (2008:480) that data analysis implies the researcher's understanding of events as related by participants, data analysis requires a reorganisation of information to interpret it meaningfully. The researcher used thematic analysis which according to Boyatzis (1998:89), involves searching through data in order to determine repeating patterns since it is flexible and allows for a wide range of analytic options (Holloway & Todres (2003:150).

The following useful steps pertaining to data collection and data analysis, as suggested by Creswell (2012:23), were followed:

- **Data collection**

For this study a literature study and interviews with information rich participants with relevant experience was conducted.

- **Transcribing of interviews and reading transcriptions**

For this study individual semi-structured interviews with school principals and SGB chairpersons, as well as semi-structured focus group interviews with parents were transcribed. Riesman (1993:95) confirms the necessity of data transcription for qualitative research when he asserts that transcribing verbal data helps the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the data. Transcriptions were initially read in totality to obtain a holistic view.

The challenge of remaining faithful to the interviewees' actual thoughts and words was overcome by reviewing transcriptions and recorded interviews.

- **Coding of data in terms of themes**

This process was time consuming due to a large volume of information. However, this is the only way to deal with large volumes of data. Bergh and Van Wyk in Hoberg (1999:64) concur by saying that “data needs to be divided into meaningful segments during data analysis”.

- **Data is looked at more closely to identify trends and pattern**

The researcher observed interrelationships between data obtained through interviews and that which was obtained through the literature study.

- **Interpretation of data aimed at writing a report and asking questions concerning lesson learnt from the research.**

Using categories pertaining to the main themes as a reference point and applying logical and argumentative reasoning, the researcher used information obtained from the interviewees, including relevant verbatim quotations, to substantiate categories that were identified. Where applicable, reference was also made to the theoretical frameworks and other relevant information obtained from the literature study in writing the report.

### **3.2.1.6 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a term that is often used in qualitative research and contains the components of validity and reliability which often appears in qualitative research.

MacMillan and Schumacher (1993:157) define validity, for which the term credibility is often used in qualitative research, as the degree to which scientific explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world. It refers to the truth of propositions that are generated by the research. In quantitative research it is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. According to Bashir (2008:39), validity in terms of qualitative research implies credibility of research which can be defended when challenged and which would therefore be trustworthy. Valid research would therefore mean that the research is conducted within ethical boundaries and that it provides the assurance that the outcomes are authentic or trustworthy. Merriam (2009:18) states that

all researchers, irrespective of whether they conduct qualitative or quantitative research, have to compile valid data.

Validity would imply that triangulation (the use of two or more data collection methods are applied (Creswell 2012:259) and that bias is restrained as far as possible during the collection and the analysis of data (Creswell 2012:258). In this study the researcher analysed documents and conducted relevant interviews with information-rich participants and therefore adhered to the principle of triangulation.

According to MacMillan and Schumacher (1993:227) reliability refers to the consistency of measurement, the extent to which the results are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collecting. Best and Kahn (2006:289) also define reliability as the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates. According to Malhotra and Birks (2004:313) reliability refers to the extent to which a scale produces constant results if repeated measurements are made. These explanations, however, relate to qualitative research. In terms of qualitative research, reliability implies the correct application of methods and analysis of data (Creswell 2012:258). In this regard the research remained objective as far as possible (Creswell 2012:260) and analysed data in terms of the data revealed. The analysis of data was conducted by means of academically acknowledged means (see Section 3.2.1.5).

In terms of generalization it has to be said that qualitative research is very seldom, if ever, generalisable due to limited locations and participants (Bashir 2008:39). In this research, relatively few participants in terms of two selected schools partook in the research. However, the transferability of its findings (Best and Kahn 2006:289) and therefore the relevance of its recommendations could possibly be determined by principals of other schools and provincial Departments of Education.

### **3.3 ASPECTS CONCERNING ETHICS**

Mason (2001:290) argues that ethical concerns must be a priority on the research agenda of any researcher.

After having obtained permission from the Circuit Manager of Zeerust District Office to conduct research at the two selected schools (see Appendix V), the researcher made appointments with

participants to arrange interviews during their free time. The researcher gained the trust of participants by assuring them that the principles below would be honoured.

### **3.3.1 Informed consent**

The requirement of informed consent implies the following as articulated by De Vos (1998:2): “The identified participants must be informed about the investigation, its goal and the procedures that will be followed to collect data before they decide to take part in the research.” For the purpose of this study the researcher sought approval from the Circuit Manager of the Zeerust District (See Appendix V). Principals, SGB chairpersons and parents, including those serving in the SGBs, were informed via letters (See Appendices VI, VII and VIII). The purpose of the study procedures to be followed during the research process, as well as the reasons for selecting the participants, were explained to participants in clear terms which did not make allowance for any misinterpretation.

### **3.3.2 Freedom to withdraw**

The researcher assured the participants verbally and in writing that their participation was voluntary and that a decision to withdraw from the research at any time would be accepted kindly without any penalty being imposed (Johnson & Christensen 2004:119). Participants were not at all forced to participate in this research.

### **3.3.3 Confidentiality and anonymity**

The application of the requirement of assuring confidentiality and anonymity to the participants allowed participants to provide information willingly. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004:119) anonymity means that “the participants’ identity, although possibly known to the research group, is not revealed by the researcher”. In qualitative research, however, researchers know who the participants are since they have to obtain their consent. Confidentiality means that a researcher does not link any information to the identity of a participant. Confidentiality and anonymity are vital to avoid linking information that could be embarrassing to the participant. In this regard, Johnson and Christensen (2004:119) assert that confidentiality and anonymity are important because it is impossible to know how people might interpret responses and whether responses might have adverse consequences for participants. In line with the above, the names of participants were not revealed in this study. Confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to when data was analysed.

Principals, SGB chairpersons and parents including those serving in the SGBs were assured that their responses to the interview questions would not be ascribed to their identity (See Appendix IX).

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

This section focused on aspects relating to the chosen qualitative research design. Aspects that were covered focused on the following components and their appropriateness for this study: the qualitative research approach, population and sampling, selection of institutions and participants, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical issues. The methodology employed showed a variety of strengths. One of the strengths was that interaction with participants took place in its natural setting as far as possible. This enabled principals, SGB chairpersons and parent SGB members to explain their experiences concerning parent involvement in the setting where they occurred, namely the school.

Individual and focus group interviews that are semi-structured had the advantage of obtaining a thorough understanding of participants' opinions and experiences whilst allowing the researcher to work according to schedule designed to obtain the required information.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the findings from the data gathered from individual interviews and focus group interviews are analysed and discussed. Data was collected from two selected schools over a period of two months. The research involved forty participants. The analysis and findings presented in this chapter are based on individual interviews with two principals, two SGB chairpersons and two focus group interviews with sixteen parents serving in the SGBs and four focus group interviews with twenty other parents affiliated with the two selected schools (see Section 3.2.1.4.2). The participants used English as a medium of communication. The interviews and focus group interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and finally analysed and interpreted. Reference to the literature study is made if relevant.

Biographic information concerning the participants are provided before commencing with the analysis of data since it places the data obtained from them in a particular context.

#### **4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS**

The characteristics of participants are given followed by the presentation of certain aspects pertaining to principals, SGB chairpersons, parents serving in the SGB, and active and inactive parents.

##### **4.2.1 Principals of schools**

Table 4.1 presents the biographic data of principals which may be helpful to understand their views in relation to the practice of parent involvement and the management thereof at their secondary schools.

**Table 4.1: Principals of schools**

<b>PRINCIPAL</b>	<b>SCHOOL A</b>	<b>SCHOOL B</b>
Age	53 years	51 years
Gender	Male	Female
Teaching experience	33 years	23 years
Experience as a principal	25 years	12 years
Marital status	Married	Married
Home language	Setswana	Afrikaans
Highest qualification	Hons (B.Ed.)	B.Ed.
Workshops on parents involvement	Yes	No

\* Hons B.Ed: - Honours Bachelor of Education Management Degree

\* B.Ed: - Bachelor of Education Degree

Both principals are married and speak Setswana and Afrikaans respectively as their home languages. The principal of school A has thirty-three years teaching experience whilst the principal from School B has twenty-three years teaching experience. The data presented in Table 4.1 shows that both principals started teaching during the apartheid era. Both principals have extensive experience as principals. Principal from School A stated that he attended two workshops on parent involvement whilst the principal from School B did not attend any such workshop. Their experience and academic status would suggest that they could be effective in leading programmes on parent involvement in their respective schools.

#### **4.2.2 SGB chairpersons**

Table 4.2 summarises the characteristics of SGB chairpersons in Schools A and B. The chairpersons were interviewed individually. The researcher considered them as very information-rich participants in relation to parent involvement at their respective schools.



**Table 4.2: SGB Chairpersons of schools**

<b>SGB CHAIRPERSON</b>	<b>SCHOOL A</b>	<b>SCHOOL B</b>
Age	56 years	45 years
Gender	Male	Female
Numbers of years as SGB Chairperson	6 years	3 year
Employment	Principal	Businesswoman
Marital status	Married	Married
Home language	Setswana	Setswana
Highest qualification	Hons (B.Ed.)	Dip in HRM
Workshops on parent involvement	Yes	No

\* Hons B.Ed. - Honours Bachelor of Education Management Degree

\* Dip in HRM. – Diploma in Human Resources Management

Both chairpersons are married and speak Setswana as their home language. The data presented in table 4.2 shows that they have three or more years of experience as SGB chairpersons. The chairperson from School A stated that he attended two workshops on parent involvement whilst the chairperson from School B did not attend such a workshop. Their experience and academic status would suggest that they are effective in leading programmes on parent involvement at their respective schools.

#### **4.2.3 Parents serving in the SGB at both schools**

This section summarises the characteristics of parents serving in the SGB in both schools in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. The parents serving in the SGB were part of the focus group interviews. The researcher considered them as being information-rich participants in terms of the topic of this study.

**Table 4.3: Parents serving in the SGB at School A**

<b>Parents</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Age	39	40	43	45	49	51	54	57
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female
Marital status	Single	Married	Single	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single
Qualification	B.Ed.	Matric	Matric	Matric	B.A.	NPDE	B.Ed.	Hons (B.A.)
Experience as SGB member	3 years	6 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	6 years
Workshops on parent involvement	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

**Table 4.4: Parents serving in the SGB at School B**

<b>Parents</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
Age	38	39	41	42	44	46	49	51
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Marital status	Single	Divorced	Single	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single
Qualification	Matric	Matric	Hons (B.Ed.)	ACE	Grade 10	NPDE.	Hons (B.Ed.)	NPDE.
Experience as SGB member	3 years	3 years	3 year	3 years	3years	6 years	3 years	3 years
Workshops on parent involvement	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No

\* Hons B.Ed. - Honours Bachelor of Education Degree

- \* ACE - Advanced Certificate in Education
- \* B.A. - Bachelor of Arts Degree
- \* B.Ed. - Bachelor of Education Degree
- \* Hons. BA - Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree
- \* NPDE - National Professional Diploma in Education
- \* Matric - Grade 12

The majority of the parents have more than three or more years' experience serving in an SGB. Of the sixteen parents the majority were women. The youngest parent was a female parent aged thirty-eight and the eldest was a female parent aged fifty-seven. The researcher considered the parents capable of implementing programmes related to parent involvement at their respective secondary schools since they have served as SGB members for at least three years.

#### **4.2.4 Parents**

Twenty parents from the two schools were interviewed as they were considered to be in a good position to discuss matters concerning parent involvement as they had children in the schools. As mentioned in Chapter 3, parents constituted ten active and ten inactive from both schools. The parents' characteristics are summarised in Tables 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 below.

##### **4.2.4.1 Active parents**

The ten active parents from both schools were selected in terms of their activity at the selected schools.

**Table 4.5: Active parents of School A**

<b>Parent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Age	37	38	40	47	56
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male
Marital status	Single	Married	Widow	Married	Divorced
Qualification	Dip in Acc	Dip. Ed	Dip in HR	B.Ed.	Dip. Ed
Employment	Bursar	Teacher	HR Manager	Teacher	Teacher

No. of Children at the school	1	2	2	1	2
Meetings attended in 2015	2	3	2	3	3
Workshop on parent involvement	No	No	No	No	No

**Table 4.6: Active parents of School B**

<b>Parent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Age	36	38	40	47	53
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
Marital status	Married	Single	Widower	Divorced	Married
Qualification	Matric	Dip. Ed.	Hons (B.Ed.)	Hons (B.Ed.)	Matric
Employment	Cleaner	Teacher	Teacher	Principal	Secretary
No. of Children at the school	1	2	2	2	2
Meetings attended in 2015	2	3	3	3	3
Workshop on parent involvement	No	No	No	No	No

\* Matric - Grade 12

\* Hons B.Ed. -Honours Bachelor of Education Degree

\* Dip in Acc - Diploma in Accounting

\* Dip.Ed. - Diploma in Education

\* Dip in HR - Diploma in Human Resources Management

The active parents' academic qualifications suggest that they could deliver a valuable service in terms of promoting parents' involvement with schools. They attended one to three meetings at school

during the year that the interviews were conducted. However, none of them had attended a workshop on parent involvement.

#### 4.2.4.2 Inactive parents

Ten inactive parents were randomly chosen from a list indicating non-activity in terms of attending functions at school. They were considered to be information-rich in terms of the reasons for their inactivity.

**Table 4.7 Inactive parents of School A**

<b>Parent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Age	37	38	40	47	60
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Marital status	Married	Single	Widow	Married	Divorced
Qualification	Matric	Matric	Grade 10	Grade 7	Grade 11
Employment	Bank Teller	Policeman	Security Guard	Housewife	Domestic worker
No. of Children at the school	2	2	2	1	1
Meetings attended in 2014	0	0	1	0	0
Workshop on parent involvement	No	No	No	No	No

**Table 4.8: Inactive Parents of School B**

<b>Parent</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Age	40	41	44	47	58
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
Marital status	Married	Single	Widower	Married	Divorced
Qualification	LLB	Matric	Matric	Grade 11	Grade 10

Employment	Magistrate	Metro Police	Taxi Driver	Security Guard	House wife
No. of Children at the school	2	2	2	1	1
Meetings attended in 2014	0	0	0	0	0
Workshop on parent involvement	No	No	No	No	No

\* Matric - Grade 12

\* LLB - Bachelor of Laws Degree

One parent indicated that she had attended one meeting, but this might not be so since inactive parents were chosen from a list which indicated non-activity in terms of parent involvement with schools. None of them had attended a workshop on parent involvement.

Nine of the parents were working. As a result of the nature of their jobs, the interviews revealed they did not spend sufficient time with their children at home.

### 4.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

During careful scrutiny of transcriptions of interviews, the researcher identified themes, which were related to the research questions, which in turn, related to question posed during the interviews. The following themes, with complementary categories, as well as sub-categories if relevant, will be discussed in the sequence indicated below.

- 1 Perceptions of the meaning of parent involvement
- 2 Ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education
- 3 Benefits of parent involvement
- 4 Challenges related to parent involvement
- 5 Strategies to overcome challenges of parent involvement

### **4.3.1 Perceptions of the meaning of parent involvement**

It was considered important to gain information on participants' perceptions of the meaning of parent involvement since these could have implications for recommendations concerning the management of parent involvement at the selected schools. Two categories in terms of the perceptions of parent involvement that participants held, could be distinguished, namely that of varied perceptions of parent involvement and the need to broaden perceptions of parent involvement.

#### **4.3.1.1 Varied of the meaning of parent involvement**

Varied perceptions were obtained from participants when asked what they understood by the concept of parent involvement. The views expressed by the two principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGBs of the two selected schools concerning their understanding of the concept parent involvement in terms of learners' education, showed that they had clear, yet incomprehensive views. In answering the question as to what parent involvement means, both Principal A and Principal B emphasised some activities which are aimed at promoting children's formal education. These activities, according to them, included fundraising, consulting with teachers, helping children with homework and encouraging good behaviour of children.

Principal A explained his understanding of parent involvement as follows:

*Parents talk to teachers about their children's performance; they help with discipline; and they help their children with homework.*

Principal B shared the same sentiments by saying:

*Learning should not end in the classroom; it should continue even at home. Parents should supervise homework and they should support school activities such as fundraising activities.*

Principal B also made reference to parents' important role in disciplining parents at home

The explanation of SGB chairpersons showed that they considered parent involvement as help given to children by parents that concerns the formal educative process. This became evident, inter alia, in a view expressed by the SGB chairperson from School B when she stated:

*I think paying school fees, buying of school uniforms, supporting school activities and helping learners with homework is evidence of parent involvement in their children's education.*

The SGB chairperson from School A held an almost identical view than the SGB chairperson from School B which correlated parent involvement with assisting children with homework, supplying them with school uniforms, as well as paying school fees. SGB Chairperson A said:

*I believe the provision of school uniforms, supporting school activities and helping learners with homework and paying school fees, is a sign of parent involvement in children's education.*

The SGB chairpersons concurred with principals on the matter of parents being involved in school based activities and helping learners with homework. Their views are in keeping with those of Squelch and Lemmer (1994:93) and Decker and Lemmer's (1993:115) definition of parent involvement as the participation of parents in a wide range of school based and home-based activities to improve children's education. (see Section 1.11).

Parents serving in the SGBs from School A and School B also had a fair, yet limited, understanding of the concept of parent involvement. They were convinced that parent involvement means that parents have a role to play in learners' formal education and were mainly concerned with parents' involvement with children's homework. They believed that parents should supervise and assist their children with their homework. This view was illustrated by a female participant serving in the SGB at School A:

*Parents have a major role to play in the education of their children. Parent involvement is about parents taking part in their children's learning, thus providing their children with the learning materials as well as helping the children with homework.*



A male parent serving in the SGB from School B explained the concept of parent involvement as follows:

*Parent involvement calls for parents to work with teachers in order to know more about their children`s education and be in a position to help their children with school work. Parent involvement means supporting the child in all schooling activities.*

Active parents from both schools also emphasised assisting children with homework. An active parent from School A considered the concept of parent involvement as follows:

*Parent involvement is supporting children in the educative process but at times children come home with homework which parents cannot tackle because of our limited education; however we should try our best to support our children.*

A male active parent participant from School B stated that “parents should take part in the education of their children. If everything is left in the hands of teachers, it means burdening them”. He further explained:

*Parent involvement comes in different forms including parents who are supportive and parents who actively participate in their children`s formal education.*

The above view relates to Vandegrift and Greene’s (see Section 2.5) explanation of the scope of parent involvement according to their premise that parent involvement can take on the form of four degrees in terms of supporting children and being actively involved in terms of observable educational actions.

Inactive parents from both schools had a more restricted view of the meaning of parent involvement. A female inactive parent from School A, who believed that a child would only benefit if his/her formal education is guided by a professional, said:

*Parent involvement is the support I provide for my child in terms of everything required by the school ... um ... but homework must be left to teachers since they are paid to teach our children.*

An inactive parent interviewee from School B had this to say:

*I support my child as I buy uniforms, stationary and pay for other necessities and I teach her to behave well and to respect teachers. When it comes to home work, I cannot help because of the nature of my job of being a security guard which forces me to work even odd hours far from my children.*

As said, parents held different views on parent involvement. While the majority of inactive parents from both schools thought that they were duty-bound to support their children with the basic needs and that formal education was the responsibility of teachers, the majority of active parents from both schools thought that parents should take part in their children`s formal education by assisting them with their school work. The narrow view held by inactive parents was illustrated by an inactive parent from School A, who in terms of helping children with homework, emphasised the following: “My duty is to provide my child with basic needs and education is a responsibility of teachers.”

#### **4. 3.1.2 A need to broaden perceptions of parent involvement**

The majority of inactive parents of both schools held the view that providing for children`s basic needs constitute parent involvement. Their views therefore relate to Epstein`s initial theoretical model of parent involvement since they support the premises that there are separate responsibilities for families and schools, and that parents dominate the education of their children till the school takes over (see Section 2.4.1.2). Their view on the meaning of parent involvement can also be related to Epstein`s typology of parent involvement since it implies Epstein`s Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting). They ignored Type 2 parent involvement (Communication), Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering), Type 4 (Learning at home), Type 5 (Decision-making) and Type 6 (Community involvement) (see Section 2.4.1.3) in describing their views of what the concept parent involvement means to them. Although the majority of inactive parents considered the formal education of their children to be the school`s responsibility, it seems from the complaint of some inactive parents that the school climate is uninviting (see Section 4.3.4.2.2) that some of them perhaps considered Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) as being part of parent involvement.

In terms of Bronfenbrenner`s ecological model, it could be said that inactive parents` perception of the phenomenon of parent involvement were restricted mainly to the microsystem (see Section 2.8) since inactive parents emphasised Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting). It even seemed as if for

many, the school did not even form part of their microsystem. The relationship between school and the home therefore did not function properly and mesosystemic interaction between parents and the school was deficient (see Section 2.8).

The interviews revealed that active parents' perception of the meaning of the concept of parent involvement accentuated assisting children with homework. It therefore made provision for Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home). They also made reference to aspects that suggested Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) and Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering) in their descriptions of parent involvement. Since their views on how parents should be involved in the education of their children included moulding of learners' behaviour, encouraging school attendance, provision of uniforms and transport, and providing resources for teaching and learning (see Section 4.3.2), it could, by implication, be said that they also considered Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting) as being part of parent involvement. Participants' views concerning the ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education can be regarded as an extension to their answers to what the meaning of the concept of parent involvement is.

The interviews revealed that SGB parent members' perception of the concept of parent involvement related to Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home), as well as Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) and Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering) suggested by the fact that mention was made that parents should support all school activities (see Section 4.3.1.1). They also acknowledged the role that parents have to play in providing uniforms and transport, and encouraging children to attend school in referring to ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education and therefore indirectly acknowledged Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting) as being part of the concept of parent involvement (see Sections 4.3.2.2 and 4.3.2.4). They made no reference to Type 5 (Decision-making) although they served in SGBs.

SGB chairpersons' perceptions of parent involvement related to Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting), Type 2 parent involvement (Communication), Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering) and Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home). The same applied for school principals (see Section 4.3.1.1).

Neither SGB chairpersons' and school principals' perceptions of the concept of parent involvement, nor their understanding of the ways in which parents should be involved in their children's

education, related to Type 5 parent involvement (Decision-making) though they played leading roles in their SGBs.

Type 6 parent involvement (Collaboration with the community) was totally neglected by all participant groups in terms of the meaning of the concept of parent involvement and ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education.

The ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education according to interviewees' views, to which some reference was made in this section, are discussed in the section that follows.

#### **4.3.2 Ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education**

As mentioned, this section relates to the previous section on perceptions of the meaning of the concept of parent involvement. Several ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children were identified by participants:

- Moulding of learners' behaviour
- Encouraging school attendance
- Supervision of homework
- Provision of uniforms and transport
- Consulting teachers during open-book days
- Provision of resources for teaching and learning
- Attendance of school meetings and other events

##### **4.3.2.1 Moulding of learners' behaviour**

Principals A and B expected parents to be involved in their children's education by helping to establish orderly behaviour to combat undisciplined learner behaviour at school. In this regard Principal A stated:

*We expect parents to mould learners' behaviour so as to minimise bullying and some form of indiscipline at school, which negatively affect teaching and learning.*

He further emphasised that

*effective teaching and learning takes place when there is discipline in class: hence, the moulding of learners' behaviour must not be left to schools alone.*

Principal B said that

*the child's parents may affect his beliefs and behaviour, hence we expect them to mould the behaviour of these learners.*

The above views are in keeping with Bronfenbrenner's view that the child's parents affect his/her beliefs and behaviour, even though, according to him, the child may affect the behaviour and beliefs of the parent (see Section 2.8).

Active parents and inactive parents from both School A and School B believed moulding of children's behaviour was a parent's responsibility. However, they also thought that principals and teachers should discipline learners who misbehaved at school. One inactive parent from School A expressed this view as follows:

*I know it is my role as a parent to mould my child's behaviour but when he/she misbehaves at school, teachers should enforce discipline.*

#### **4.3.2.2 Encouraging school attendance**

Principals from both schools mentioned encouraging school attendance by parents as an essential component of a parent's task. This is in keeping with the view of Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg's (see Section 2.3.2.2) which relates parent involvement to better school attendance. In this regard Principal A said:

*We expect parents to encourage learners to attend school regularly so that learners do not miss out lessons, but you find that these parents allow their children to be absent with no valid reasons.*

The majority of inactive and active parents, as well as parent SGB members commented that they do encourage their children to attend school regularly.

#### **4.3.2.3 Supervision of homework**

It should be noted that principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB, as well as active parents accentuated homework supervision, an aspect which was not mentioned by inactive parents.

An SGB chairperson from School A referred to the importance of supervision of homework when he stated that the supervision of homework “helps to bring home and school closer”. This view is in accordance with that of Epstein who believes that homework has the potential of developing home-school partnerships (see Section 2.4.1.3).

Chairperson B emphasised the following with regard to assisting children with homework:

*It is important for us as parents to help children with homework because it is part of learning at home ... It is essential [for schools] to provide us with information and ideas on helping learners on curriculum related issues.*

This view relates to that of Epstein’s (see Section 2.4.1.4.) who posits that learning at home implies that school provide families with information on helping learners with their homework and other curriculum related activities, including planning and decisions.

The view of an inactive parent participant from School A seems to summarise the view of inactive parents:

*I provide my child with everything needed at school but the issue of homework is the teachers’ job and ...um... you find that the jargon used in the homework is difficult for some of us with limited education.*

The above view is in keeping with the views of Moles (see Section 2.6.3) who says that too often invitations to parents concerning assistance with homework are couched in educational jargon, big words and lengthy prose.

Active parents from Schools A and B indicated that parents should assist their children with their homework. They, however, commented that they could only help them if they knew what to do and that at times they could not help them because they did not know the answers. Sometimes they only support their children by providing a timetable for doing homework.

#### **4.3.2.4 Provision of uniforms and transport**

All the participants agreed that it was the duty of parents to provide children with school uniforms and to see to it that they are transported to school. An inactive parent from School A acknowledged her responsibility of providing uniforms and transport to his children, but also admitted some challenges:

*Um ... it is my responsibility to provide a uniform and transport for my children but sometimes they miss school after failing to pay for their monthly transport as I am unemployed and ... um ... [I] therefore encourage the Department of Education to extend the transport facility to our communities the way they are doing with farming communities around us.*

Principal B confirmed the above views by saying with great concern that “in other instances the Department of Basic Education through schools assist learners from disadvantaged communities with transport”. This view was also supported by SGB chairperson from School A who said:

*The Department of Basic Education is assisting the schools with transport for learners from the nearby farms, and I feel compelled to advocate for this transport facility to be extended to all communities.*

Participants’ views showed that the provision of transport to learners is not only the responsibility of parents, but that it is also that of the Department of Basic Education which, in terms of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, shows interaction between the micro- and exosystem (see Section 2.8).

The facial expressions of most inactive parents and principals showed that the lack of transport is a serious concern.

#### **4.3.2.5 Consulting with teachers during open-book days**

Principal A and B expected all parents to attend open-book days which allow parents to consult with teachers. Principal B said that “open book-days help parents and teachers to find each other for the benefit of the child’s education”.

Most of the inactive parents from Schools A and B indicated that they could not consult with teachers during the open-book days due to work commitment. An inactive parent from School B expressed herself by saying that “it is difficult for me to attend school meetings and events and consulting teachers during open-book days because of the nature of my job”. However, one should also bear in mind that the majority of inactive parents aired the view that the formal education of their children was the school’s responsibility (see Section 4.3.3.1). The majority of inactive parents from Schools A and B indicated that the provision of school uniforms and transport were the best they could do in terms of parent involvement.

Some of the inactive parents commented that at times they send family representatives for consultation with teachers, but that teachers only allowed them to check children’s books and did not initiate any discussion. All active parents and SGB deemed consultation with teachers was an important aspect of parent involvement and that they attended open-book days

All active parents and parent SGB members considered member parents consulting with teachers as very important in terms of parent involvement.

#### **4.3.2.6 Provision of resources for teaching and learning**

Principals, parent SGB members and active parents from both schools mentioned the provision of resources for teaching and learning materials as a way in which parents should be actively involved in their children’s education. Principal A had this to say:



*We expect parents to provide resources for teaching and learning such as dictionaries and textbooks that are not provided by the school [and] money for educational trips and projects as most schools run on stringent budgets.*

SGB Chairperson from School B concurred with the principal from School A by saying:

*Parents must provide teaching and learning materials for their children because the grants provided to schools by the government is not enough; otherwise we have to look for donations in order to augment school coffers.*

Parents held conflicting views regarding their role in terms of the provision of teaching and learning resources. Active parents from both schools supported parents' provision of resources for teaching and learning whilst both schools' inactive parents rejected this view.

An active parent from School A admitted that it was parents' responsibilities to provide teaching and learning for their children by saying: "As a parent my duty is to pay for educational tours as well as for projects for my child."

An inactive parent from School B had this to say: "The provision of teaching and learning is the responsibility of the government as some of us are not working and cannot afford to pay for educational trips and projects."

#### **4.3.2.7 Attendance of school meetings and events**

The principals, SGB chairpersons, parents serving in the SGB and active parents from School A and B mentioned that it was the duty of parents to attend school meetings and events. In this regard, the principal from School B had this to say:

*We expect parents to attend school meetings and events so that they have an input in the running of the school. They can also help the school in fundraising events held at the school as cashiers and to maintain order.*

SGB chairperson from School B commented as follows on attendance of school meetings and events:

*We expect parents to attend school meetings and events such as accompanying learners on an educational tour. They will help the school in maintaining discipline in such educational tours.*

An active parent from School A concurred with the view of the principals and the SGB chairpersons that it was the responsibility of parents to attend school meetings and events as follows:

*Attending school meetings enables parents to have a voice in the affairs of the school such as proposing school fees for the coming year and to plan school events.*

Inactive parents differed with the above views regarding attendance of school meetings and events. An inactive parent offered an excuse for not attending school meetings:

*The idea of attending school meetings and events is a difficult task as some of us work far from the school coupled with the nature of my work of guarding premises during the day when I am wanted to attend a meeting or an event at school.*

### **4.3.3 Benefits of parental involvement**

It was shown in the literature study that parent involvement has a great deal of benefits in education (see Section 2.3.2). The participants of this research came up with a number of benefits of parent involvement that correspond with those discussed in Section 2.3.2.1 and Section 2.3.2.2. The benefits identified during the analysis of data were the following:

- \* Improved academic performance
- \* Improved provision of teaching and learning resources
- \* Improved relationship between parents and school
- \* Improved learner motivation and school attendance

#### **4.3.3.1 Improved learner performance**

Principals, SGB chairpersons and SGB parent members from both schools identified improved academic performance as one of the benefits of involving parents in the education of their children.

Principal A stated that “parent involvement in learners’ education is very vital as it leads to improved academic achievement”. This view is in accordance with that of Hill and Taylor (see Section 2.3.1.1) who state that cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have consistently shown that parent involvement in their children’s education is associated with improved academic performance. That “the benefits associated with parent involvement include decreased absenteeism and improved learner academic performance”, was iterated by Principal B. These views once again relate to those of Hill and Taylor who assert that parent involvement means that parents become united with the school and thereby form an enlarged base which promotes acceptable behaviour among learners. (see Section 2.3.1.2).

Although the primary aim of parent involvement would be improved academic performance, parents did not mention it as a benefit of parent involvement. The researcher is of the opinion that active parents took this benefit for granted. The fact that the majority of inactive parents held the view that their task in terms of parent involvement was restricted to parenting and making provision for their children’s basic needs (see Section 4.3.1) probably contributed to their silence concerning the benefit of parent involvement under discussion. Nevertheless, as indicated in Section 4.3.4.2.1, inactive parents expected schools to produce good results.

#### **4.3.3.2 Improved provision of teaching and learning resources needed in classrooms**

Amongst the participants who found themselves in the managerial positions, namely principals, SGB chairpersons and SGB member parents, the benefit of improved provision of teaching and learning material as a result of parent involvement was only identified by principals. This could probably be linked to the fact that principals are the ones who deal with learners directly, unlike SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB who spend most of their time outside schools. Principals from Schools A and B felt that if parents work closely with schools they might identify shortages with regard to resources required in the teaching and learning process. This would motivate parents to walk the extra mile by augmenting prevailing teaching and learning resources required by their children at school. Principals felt that if teaching and learning resources were enough, teachers would

do their work much better. They were very aware of the schools' needs in terms of teaching and learning resources.

Active and inactive parent did not mention this benefit. This could possibly be linked to the fact that they held the view that the Department of Education should provide all the required teaching and learning resources needed in classrooms.

#### **4.3.3.3 Improved relationships between parents and school**

Principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB members and active parents from both schools demonstrated their awareness of the benefit of improved relationships between parents and school as a result of parent involvement. They indicated that when parents are involved in their children's education, teachers tend to be motivated and do their work wholeheartedly. This view is supported by Henderson and Bella (see Section 2.3.2.3) who assert that parent involvement helps teachers and principals to experience a higher morale, as well as improved job satisfaction.

An active parent from School A had this to say concerning the benefit of parent involvement under discussion: "If we work together with these teachers, they feel supported and they will do their work happily." The same parent said: "When teachers are happy our children will pass". These views relate to that of Haack (see Section 2.4.1.4) who believes that "parent involvement results in parents becoming aware of what teachers do, what children are learning and how the school functions".

Inactive parents did not mention this benefit.

Active parents indicated that learner behaviour is related to good relationships between parents and the school. They raised the point that children who are aware that their parents have a good relationship with teachers tend to behave well because they fear that teachers may report them to their parents.

#### **4.3.3.4 Improved learner motivation and improved school attendance**

Improved motivation and learner attendance were mentioned briefly by principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB members and active parents from both schools. Inactive parents from both schools did not mention either as a benefit of parent involvement.

An active parent from School B mentioned both benefits when he said:

*If parents are involved with schools children tend to be motivated to attend school, thereby improving school attendance.*

#### **4.3.4 Challenges related to parent involvement**

The following factors were identified as challenges affecting parent involvement: time constraints, parents' lack of interest and commitment, principals' limited knowledge of parent involvement, parents' limited education, poor communication between home and school, negative parental attitudes and negative teacher attitudes. They could be classified as belonging predominantly to two categories which correspond to those identified by Van Zyl (see Section 2.6), namely physical constraints and mind-centred hindrances.

##### **4.3.4.1 Physical constraints**

Two sub-categories, namely time constraints and poor communication are discussed under the category of physical constraints. However, it should be noted that it would be impossible to state that these have no linkage with mind-centred hindrances since the phenomenon of parent involvement revealed itself as a complex one of which categories and sub-categories can be distinguished, but not necessarily separated. The reader will therefore notice that though the sub-categories identified in terms of challenges concerning parent involvement may seem to predominantly belong to one of the two mentioned categories, namely physical constraints and mind centred hindrances, they may also, because of their relation to sub-categories of the other category, relate to the other category.

##### **4.3.4.1.1 Time constraints**

Time constraints were identified by principals and inactive parents as a challenge to parent involvement in schools.

The principals stated that most parents do not usually attend meetings due to work commitments. In this regard Principal B stated that "only a few parents attend meetings at this school; the rest of the parents always give apologies because they have no time due to work commitments". These views

are in keeping with Van Zyl (see Section 2.6) who supports the view that time is a major obstacle to parent involvement.

Principal B iterated that time was a challenge to parent involvement. In this regard he commented as follows:

*Teachers always give children homework but the children come back with the work not done. Children always gave excuses that their parents came back home late, hence [they] did not have time to help them.*

The above views reveal that some parents could not find time to assist in the formal education of their children. The views of principals from Schools A and B correspond with previously mentioned views expressed by parents concerning lack of time mentioned in the discussion of two categories relating to ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education, namely consulting with teachers during open book days (see Section 4.3.2.5) and attendance of school meetings (see Section 4.3.2.6).

Inactive parents from both schools expressed the view that lack of time was a serious issue by stating that they were willing to attend school activities but that time was a hindering factor. A male inactive parent from School A expressed his view concerning time constraints as follows:

*It is a good thing to be active in the education of our children but we do not have time for some of these school activities. In most cases some of us arrive home very late and at times work during weekends; and furthermore we work outside the home.*

The above view relates to that of Comer and Haynes (see Section 2.6.1) who consider it difficult to get parents involved in school management and planning because many work during the hours when meetings concerning school functions take place. However, the above view uttered by the inactive parent does not correlate to the view expressed by the majority of inactive parents that the formal education of children is the responsibility of the school (see Section 4.3.3.1).

#### 4.3.4.1.2 Poor communication between school and home

Poor communication is discussed as a sub-category of physical hindrance. Nevertheless it cannot be totally isolated from mind-centred hindrances since it also relates to a lack of interest and commitment (see Section 4.3.4.2.1) and negative attitudes (see Section 4.3.4.2.4).

Active and inactive parents from both schools identified poor communication between school and home as one of the challenges to parent involvement at schools. The majority of parents of these interview groups aired the view that poor communication between school and home renders parent involvement ineffective.

Principals A and B tended to shift the blame to parents when they stated that in most cases parents do not respond positively to communication from schools. They thought that parents ignored school circulars that were sent via their learner children. Principal B had this to say concerning responses of parents to communication from schools:

*We have been trying to communicate with the parents especially through letters, but you find a few responses. We are not sure whether the parents get these letters or not. ... Some of these parents have negative previous school experiences, hence, they no longer want to associate themselves with the school.*

The above view is in keeping with that of Lemmer and Van Wyk's (see Section 2.6.2) who state that parents who are not involved in the learners' education include parents with a negative school experience (also see Section 4.3.4.2.5).

SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGBs of both schools agreed with principals as they also believed that despite communication from schools, the majority of parents tend to distance themselves from schools and fail to respond to communication. They also believed that learners were also to blame as some do not deliver letters from the school to parents. An SGB chairperson from School A said the following in this regard:

*Even though the school tries to communicate open with the parents, some of the parents are passive; at times we feel the learners do not give letters to the parents or the parents are illiterate.*

The above interviewee also stated that letters to parents have to be multilingual to accommodate minority languages. This view relates to that of Garca-Lubeck (see Section 2.4.1.4) who recommends that letters to parents should be written in more than one language and that key educational terms should be translated in minority languages. The importance of well understood communication is in line with the view of Tam and Chan (see Section 2.4.1.4), namely that open communication between parents and teachers can help parents feel at ease about accepting help with their children`s academic work and improve further communication between home and school.

Some active and inactive parents ascribed poor communication to the fact that schools communicate through letters only. It would, be according to them, be helpful if a variety of communication media were used. They recommended a means of direct delivery. In this regard an active parent from School B articulated the following:

*The problem is that schools communicate through letters only. However, it would be helpful if they had to use a variety of communication media such as newsletters and Whatsapp [and] SMS that comes direct to our cellphones.*

Despite active and inactive parents` complaints about poor communication between school and home, principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGBs were of the opinion that they were doing an adequate job in terms of communication with parents. They felt, as shown, that parents do not respond well because they do not want to.

#### **4.3.4.2 Mind-centred hindrances**

As mentioned in the introduction to the discussion of challenges related to parent involvement, the classification of challenges pertaining to parent involvement into two broad categories does not mean that sub-categories of one category do not have any relationship to sub-categories of the other category. Mind-centred hindrances should therefore not be seen as totally independent from the sub-categories of physical constraints.

##### **4.3.4.2.1 Parents` lack of interest and commitment**

Views held by Principals A and B show that parents` lack of interest and commitment to support their children`s formal education was a barrier to parent involvement. They believed that only a few



active parents were committed to promoting their children's formal education and that the majority of parents, who they considered to be inactive, lacked interest in and commitment to activities that involve their children's formal education. Principal A responded:

*Most parents seem not [to be] interested in their children's education. We call them for meetings; they do not turn up; they do not support teachers if learners have homework.*

Principal A added:

*What makes it funny is that these parents want good results from their children, but they do not support the teachers.*

Despite their view that most parents lacked interest and commitment to children's formal education, Principals A and B were of the opinion that parents expect schools to produce good results. Concerning parents' lack of interest and commitment, both principals emphasised that this was indeed a challenge of great proportions. Their facial expressions displayed their concern regarding this matter.

The two focus groups interviews conducted with parents serving in the SGB revealed similar views in terms of parents' lack of interest and commitment than those of the principals. This reason for inadequate parent involvement possibly relates to the view held by Van Wyk (see Section 2.6.2) that parents' lack of interest and commitment results from parents' lack of knowledge and skills to develop their children. Siririka (see Section 2.6.2) also linked parents' lack of relevant skills to assist with children's academic development to limited educational experiences.

One female parent SGB member participant from the focus group from School B stated the following:

*If parents were really interested and committed, things would work well; learners would be more serious with their school work. If parents are reluctant, the learners tend to relax.*

Most views held by active parents from both schools conflicted with those of SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGBs as these parents reckoned that they tried their best to support their children's formal education. A minority of active parents indicated that at times they face problems when they try to help their children with homework due to their limited knowledge. This view was expressed despite active parents' good formal education (see Table 4.5).

One male active participant from School A provided the following view:

*It is not that we don't have interest in our children's education; it is difficult to help the child if you do not know what to do.*

The inactive parents did not identify a lack of interest and commitment as a challenge to parent involvement.

#### **4.3.4.2.2 Principals' limitations in terms of the management of parent involvement**

Both SGB chairpersons, SGB members, active and even a few inactive parents from Schools A and B indicated that principals had shortcomings which negatively influenced parents' involvement in the formal education of their children.

The SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the two SGBs felt that it was the principals' responsibility to facilitate parent involvement at schools. They believed that the principals were the ones to lead and guide activities to involve parents with schools. They indicated that it was the principals' responsibility to create an open climate at schools so that parents could actively participate in the formal education of their children.

In terms of principals' limited knowledge concerning how to facilitate parent involvement at schools and their seemingly authoritative attitudes towards parents, a female active parent from School B stated:

*Principals should pave a way for parents to participate in school programmes.  
If school authorities are accommodative, parents will feel free to participate.*

Haack's view (see Section 2.4.1.3) that a school principal who is not aware of the procedures to be put in place for communication to flow from the school to the family may result in an uninviting school climate, seems to relate to the above information.

Both active and inactive parents from both schools shared feelings similar to those of parents serving in the SGBs, as they also believed that the school climate which is determined by school principals should be inviting so that parents could feel welcome to become involved in school activities. Non-accommodative principals, they argued, hinder their involvement in their children's formal education.

In this regard an inactive parent from School B said:

*We would want to be active in the education of our children, but these principals are too strict; you come to the school to check children's progress, then you will be asked if you have an appointment with the teacher. It puts us off as parents; maybe it was the only chance I had.*

Another inactive parent from School A said:

*These principals do not create an inviting climate for us to freely participate in school activities and they only invite us to school when there is a disciplinary problem.*

The above views are in keeping with that of Moles (see Section 2.6.3), namely that the first time many parents hear from the school is when there is a problem, which results in establishing a negative association with school involvement.

The participants agreed that if principals create a climate which is conducive for interaction with parents, they would participate freely in school programmes. Principals did not comment on this aspect. It could perhaps be that they did not want to air the fact that they were also to blame in terms of not implementing parent involvement satisfactorily at their schools.

#### 4.3.4.2.3 Parents' limited education

Principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB believed that parents' level of education was of paramount importance when it came to parent involvement. This view concurs with that of Mncube (see Section 2.6.2) who considers illiteracy as an impediment to parent involvement and Siririka (see Section 2.6.2) who reckons that limited parental educational experience results in a lack of relevant skills to assist their children at home. In this regard, an SGB chairperson from School A emphasised the following concerning limited parental education:

*At times we need to bear with parents. It should be noted that some of the parents are not well educated and as a result they find it difficult to assist children with homework.*

The above views are in keeping with that of Lemmer and Van Wyk's (See Section 2.6.2) who posit that parents who are not involved in learners' education include parents who have had little education. The SGB chairperson from School A empathised with the parents as he thought that at times parents were willing but lacked the skills.

Principal B's view is congruent with the views expressed above. He said:

*We should understand [that] some of these parents ... are not well educated; it becomes difficult for them to help learners.*

Both active and inactive parents from both schools commented on the issue of parents' limited education by highlighting that it was true that some parents had limited education which made it difficult to assist their children. One active parent from School B commented by saying:

*It is difficult for parents to go about telling people that they have problems in helping their children because they are not well educated. The truth is that some parents are not well educated.*

An inactive parent from School A very clearly highlighted the pertinence of the problem of parent' limited education by simply saying "We are not well educated and we don't know what we are supposed to do." This participant's view is in line with that of Lemmer and Van Wyk's (see Section

2.6.2) who posit that many parents seem unwilling to be involved in learners' education because they are uncertain about how to develop children's knowledge and skills.

The researcher holds the view that the challenge of parents' limited education should be taken into consideration by teachers when they give learners homework. Sections of homework that may initiate problems should not only be explained in class, but also on an after school basis if necessary. Teachers could attempt to keep individual record books with information regarding demographic and biographic data of parents that include the level of education, which could possibly be obtained from the schools' information system. Of course, such information should only be provided to schools and teachers with the parents' permission.

#### **4.3.4.2.4 Negative parental attitudes**

Negative parental attitudes were identified as a challenge to parent involvement in education by principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB from both schools. In this regard Principal A stated:

*Some of these parents with little education find it difficult to speak in English to some of our expatriate teachers and those who cannot speak a local language.*

A similar view on parental attitudes is supported by Lemmer and Van Wyk (See section 2.6.2) who concur that parents who are not involved in learners' education may have a negative attitude as a result of little education in English which prevents them to communicate effectively with English speaking teachers.

Principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB alleged that some parents had surrendered everything concerning their children's formal education into the hands of the school. Such action, or rather passivity, was also noted by Siririka (see Section 2.6.2) who asserts that some parents believe that the responsibility for education belongs to the school. The participants also pointed out that parents' negative attitudes are only noted when the parents fail to avail themselves for school events like meetings and open book days.

Principals and SGB chairpersons from both schools pointed out that non-participation does not always relate to inadequacy on the school's behalf. In this regard Principal A stated:

*Some parents disadvantage their children by prohibiting them from participating in sporting activities fearing that they might get injured.*

Principals and SGB chairpersons from Schools A and B held the view that some parents who are inactive do not appreciate what the government is doing for their children's formal education. A parent serving in the SGB from School A pointed out that "parents were spoiled by the government to such an extent that they think even little things should be provided by the government". An SGB Chairperson from School A commented by saying:

*The government pays the school fees and provide food but these parents do not appreciate that; they cannot even buy stationery for their children.*

Principal B commented that it was parents' responsibility to supply pens. Views from principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving on the SGB considered learners who came to school without stationery as a reflection of parents' negative attitudes towards the formal education of their children. Some inactive parents from both schools believed that it was not they that had a negative attitude but that some teachers and principals viewed them in a negative way. One inactive parent from School A had this to say: "Because we are poor, teachers and principals tend to blame us for our children's poor performance." These views relate to that of Haack (see Section 2.6.2) who reckons that some parents believe that teachers and school principals judge them negatively, blame them for their children's difficulties, and would not acknowledge their contributions. Negative teacher attitudes are discussed in more detail in the following section.

#### **4.3.4.2.5 Negative teacher attitudes**

Quite a variety of views were expressed in terms of negative teacher attitudes.

Inactive parents felt that teachers tended to look down upon them. This, according to them, reflected teachers' negative attitudes. An inactive parent from School A commented as follows:

*You visit the school to check the progress of your child but the teachers will ask you to make an appointment and at times you are told that the teacher is busy ...um... what is that? Imagine that was the only opportunity I had due to my*

*work commitment. ... One open book day is not enough for consultation as some parents fail to have a chance to speak to the teacher because of class size.*

According to several inactive parents from both schools, as well as active parent from both schools, teachers did not bother to communicate with them in terms of their children's academic performance. Parents from the two inactive parent groups thought that teachers undermined them because teachers believed that they were not educated. Literature confirms this view. Haack (see Section 2.6.2) is of the opinion that some teachers view parents as being unable to collaborate with them and therefore do not try to involve them or tell them how they could help them.

Principals felt that teachers did not have negative attitudes towards parents and believed that what was interpreted as negative teacher attitudes by parents resulted from teachers' loaded schedules and large classes. Such views are supported by Mansfield (2009:18) who asserts that school and class size are factors that may negatively impact on parent involvement. Principal A said the following in this regard:

*Parents may regard teachers as negative, but the problem is their tight schedule. Parents are only allowed to visit the school after school out and it becomes a burden for teachers to entertain the parents. ... It is not a joke to work with more than fifty (50) learners and then be expected to entertain parents after school.*

Principals held the view that the provincial Department of Education expected too much from teachers and that accommodating parents had become a burden to teachers. In terms of workload of teachers at schools in the microsphere, and the demands of provincial Department of Education in the exosphere, an unsatisfactory relationship therefore exists (see Section 2.8).

The SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB blamed the principals for not being realistic in terms of time allocated for discussions with parents. They were of the opinion that the principals did not schedule parents' visits to their schools appropriately because dealing with parents after school hours overburdened teachers. This could possibly imply damaged, mesosystemic interaction between principals and teachers in the microsphere (see Section 2.8).

### 4.3.5 Strategies to Overcome Challenges to Parent Involvement

The following strategies to overcome challenges were identified:

- Organising workshops for parents
- Enhancing communication between school and home
- Schools are to have guidelines on parent involvement
- Organising workshops for principals and teachers
- Reducing teacher-pupil ratio
- Schools are to facilitate programmes and events that accommodate parents
- Encouraging learners to take messages home

#### 4.3.5.1 Organising workshops for parents

Interviews with principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGBs from both schools revealed that parents were viewed as people who do not have much knowledge about parent involvement. This view relates to that of Michael (see Section 2.7) who acknowledges that while all parents, irrespective of race or culture, have an interest in their children's education, they require guidance and support in parenting skills which could be provided at workshops.

The principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGBs considered workshops for parents to be an effective strategy for promoting parent involvement. They thought that if parents were given information on the importance of parent involvement in the education of their children, they would participate more willingly. They added that information on parent involvement would enable parents to gain a clear understanding concerning that which parent involvement entails. An SGB chairperson from School A expressed the consensus reached in his focus group interview succinctly and clearly as follows:

*Workshops are the best; parents would benefit a lot. The information parents get will enlighten them on the concept of parent involvement.*

SGB chairperson from School B stated that “workshops can also be organised for parents on how to help their children with homework”. This view is supported by Brown (see Section 2.7) who posits



that a way of improving parent involvement in education is to present training sessions for parents on assisting their children with homework, thereby becoming involved in their children's formal education. Haack (see Section 2.7) supports the strategy under discussion when he says that "parents who do not have the skills to help with their children's school work, or believe that they could not be effective in helping them, would be enlightened if workshops addressed their needs.

Active parents and, surprisingly even some inactive parents, from both schools indicated that they would find it helpful if they were workshopped and provided with relevant information concerning parent involvement. The parents felt that lack of knowledge on parent involvement was one of the reasons for inadequate participation in their children's formal education. An active parent from School A had this to say:

*We encourage and will appreciate the schools and principals if they can organise workshops for parents and provide more information about parent involvement.*

The importance of workshops expressed during interviews is in keeping with the view of Nye, Turner and Schwartz's (see Section 2.7) who advocate the implementation of educational training programmes that would provide parents with abilities, skills, and materials to cooperate with their children on an academic level outside the school, thereby bringing about meaningful parent involvement in the formal education of their children.

#### **4.3.5.2 Enhancing communication between home and school**

All participant groupings, including that of inactive parents, believed that communication between school and home was poor and that it had to be improved. They concur with Epstein (see Section 2.4.1.4) who states that communication between home and school should include the development of effective manners of communication between home and schools concerning school programmes and learners' progress.

Principal A emphasised the following as regards the improvement of education between home and school:

*Communication between the home and school must occur frequently, so that parents feel comfortable to share ideas with the school staff and so that they don't feel threatened but rather respond positively.*

The above views are similar to the view of William and Chavkin (Section 2.4.1.4) who assert that frequent communication between the home and school results in parents feeling comfortable to share ideas with the school staff.

Communication between teachers and parents, according to Principal A, was deficient because of uncertainties of teachers and parents. In this regard he commented as follows:

*According to how I see it, parents and teachers seem not to know what to communicate. So these communications should be clarified.*

Principal B felt that teachers knew what to communicate but blamed parents for not responding: “Teachers communicate with the parents regularly but they don’t get responses.” SGB chairpersons, parents serving in the SGB and both active and inactive parents shared the view that the means of communication currently used by the schools are ineffective (see Section 4.3.4.1.2). Some parents from both schools, active and inactive, claimed that they did not receive messages. An active parent from School A recommended the use of technology to combat inadequate communication:

*Schools should make use of technology like cell phones. Parents would get the messages directly, unlike the use of letters whereby some learners do not bring them home.*

During all the interviews mention was made of the importance of communication. They asserted the view held by Pate and Andrews (see Section 2.4.1.4) who emphasised the importance of communication when they posited that parent involvement involves commitment to consistent communication between home and school about pupils’ progress.

#### **4.3.5.3 Schools are to have guidelines on parent involvement**

Active parents from both schools held the view that there should be guidelines for all the stakeholders in terms of parent involvement. Principals A and B felt that if there were no guidelines there was going to be confusion concerning what is expected concerning parent involvement at school. Principal A had this to say:

*Guidelines are important as they guide all of us on what to do. It seems the stakeholders do not actually know what to do when it comes to parental involvement.*

Principal B concurred with Principal A by saying:

*To operate without any guidelines is like a teacher teaching without a syllabus. Most of us need to have a guide on parent involvement so that we do things the right way.*

SGB chairpersons, parents serving in the SGB and active and even some inactive parents from both schools shared the necessity of being guided in terms of parent involvement so that they would do things that would reap benefits. When asked about how they felt about having guidelines on parent involvement, an active parent from School B had this to say: “The guidelines or written policies are important to us as they will give us light on what we are supposed to do.” These views are in agreement with those of Chavkin and Williams’ (see section 2.6.3) who confirm the need for policies on parent involvement by stating that there are few written policies at any level that promote parent involvement.

All the interviews made mention of the difficulty to operate without having written guidelines. Participants agreed that clear guidelines would prevent confusion as to how to operate in terms of parent involvement at schools. This finding relates to recommendations in Section 5.4.1 that concerns the macro-, exo-, and microsystem as regards the need for synergetic action to counteract the shortcoming discussed in this section.

#### **4.3.5.4 Organising workshops for principals and teachers**

The principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB thought it a noble idea to suggest that workshops on parent involvement be organised for principals and teachers. Many of them not only verbalised that they were not well versed in terms of what parent involvement entails, their uncertainty also showed in their worried expressions which revealed their earnest questioning as to what was expected from them in terms of parent involvement.

Principal B expressed the need for information concerning parent involvement clearly: “When parents see us, they think we know it all, but the truth is that we also need to be educated about this concept”. She went on to say:

*It will benefit both principals and teachers if someone from above comes and workshop us. It would boost both principals’ and teachers’ confidence.*

An SGB Chairperson from School A shared the same sentiments and responded by saying that he agreed that “a workshop for principal and teachers on parent involvement will help us to deal with the concept of parent involvement”.

The views expressed bear relevance to the opinion of Nye, Turner and Schwartz’s (see Section 2.7) who advocate the implementation of educational training programmes that would provide principals and teachers with abilities, skills and materials to cooperate with their children on an academic level outside the school, thereby bringing about meaningful parent involvement in the formal education of their children.

Principal A mentioned that “[s]ome of [their] teachers do not have enough knowledge about the concept of parent involvement”. He said that teachers’ lack of knowledge could promote irresponsible behaviour such as those pointed out by Parhar (see Section 2.7) who stated that “teachers with misguided ideologies tend to reinforce practices of exclusion in relation to uneducated and socially disadvantaged parents”.

The researcher noted that parents did not mention workshops for principals and SGB chairpersons and SGB members as a strategy to curb the challenges faced in terms of parent involvement. This might be due to the fact that they regard principals, SGB chairpersons and SGB members to be capable of improving parent involvement, even though they raised some serious concerns about the current implementation of parent involvement.

#### **4.3.5.5 Reducing teacher-pupil ratio**

Concerning teacher-pupil ratio Principal B had the following to say:

*Teachers are having too many learners in their classes; this means many parents to deal with. It will be better to deal with a reasonable number of parents.*

She believed that it was difficult to involve parents in school activities when class sizes are big and expressed her concern that it was strenuous for teachers to deal with too many parents.

SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB of both schools shared the same sentiments as Principal B. They supported the idea of reducing class sizes. They, too, thought that if teachers had manageable class sizes, it would provide more time to attend to parents. The words “I feel for the teachers: they have many learners to teach; so many learners mean many parents to deal with during consultation” illustrated an empathetic SGB chairperson’s concern for teachers’ plight of having to deal with their high teacher-pupil ratios.

Parents were very aware of the problem of high teacher-pupil ratios. Some parents were not optimistic that the situation would change. An active male parent from School A looked despondent when he said:

*Reducing class sizes would mean increasing the number of classrooms which would take a long time to be achieved considering the tight budgets of schools.*

Principal A did not mention the strategy of reducing teacher-pupil ratios. The reason for not mentioning it might relate to the fact that he, being a very busy non-teaching manager, may not be very aware of seeing class size as a challenge as regards parent involvement. It could also be that he does not believe that he can do anything about reducing the teacher-pupil ratios at his school.

The negative views held by SGB chairpersons, parents serving in the SGB, and active and inactive parents from both schools on the issue of teacher-pupil ratio shows that this is a general concern.

#### **4.3.5.6 Schools are to facilitate programmes and events that would encourage parent involvement**

Principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGBs from both schools felt that school should have programmes and events that would encourage parent involvement. Words uttered in this regard came from an active parent from school:

*If schools can offer programmes and events that encourage parent involvement, parents would improve their skills in helping their children, hence they would become motivated to be involved in the education of their children.*

The above views are supported by numerous researchers, including Lemmer and Van Wyk (see Section 2.3.2.4) who assert that parent involvement improves parental skills in teaching their children.

The majority of active and even some inactive parents from both schools felt that if schools would accommodate them, they would be willing to take part in the programmes and events aimed at improving the education of their children. Interviews revealed that events of a very limited scope were taking place at the schools. In this regard an inactive parent of School A said: “If schools call us to take part in school events we are willing, but at times we just hear that there was an event at school without being told.” However, it should also be borne in mind that the majority of inactive parents also aired the view that they were unwilling to participate with schools since they believed that they had nothing to offer earlier during the interviews conducted with them (see Section 4.3.3). Nevertheless, communication between school and home needs improvement to grow the attendance of parents (see Section 4.4.2.1).

#### **4.3.5.7 Messages are to be delivered to parents**

This section once again highlights the inadequacy of communication between school and parents (see Section 4.3.4.1.2). Principals, SGB chairpersons and parents serving in the SGB, as well as active and inactive parents of both schools agreed that learners should be encouraged to deliver messages from school to their parents. The participants shared their concern that some learners do not fulfil this function. An active parent from School B had this to say: “At times I just hear my neighbour telling me about a meeting at school of which I did not know.” As mentioned in Section 4.3.4.1.2, this parent suggested methods such as Whatsapp and SMS texting, rather than the printed word, to ensure that she receives messages directly from the school. Principals mentioned that the use of hand delivered letters by learners was the cheapest way of sending messages to learners’ homes.

The fact that unsatisfactory communication between school and home results in messages not reaching their destination was a general concern expressed during the interviews which confirms the

importance of changing the communication means at the selected schools. The significance of adequate communication for parent involvement resonate with the views of Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki and Mindnich (see Section 2.4.1.4) who assert that communication is central to parent involvement.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented biographical data concerning research participants and discussed their views concerning the concept of parent involvement, ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children, the benefits of parent involvement, parent involvement's challenges, as well as strategies to overcome inadequacies in terms of parent involvement which would inform the recommendations made in the next chapter.

From the data collected during interviews, it emerged that the concept of parent involvement was not perceived in the same manner by the various participant groups. The majority of inactive parents thought that caring for their children and seeing to it that their basic needs are met was all that was needed in terms of parent involvement. According to Epstein's typology of parents, these parents should be considered in terms of Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting). The other participants groups' perception of parent involvement showed varying degrees of parent involvement in terms of Epstein's typology of parent involvement. Not one of the participant groups (principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB member parents, and other active parents and inactive parents) included Epstein's Type 5 parent involvement (Decision-making) or Type 6 parent involvement (Collaboration with the community) in their descriptions of their understanding of the concept of parent involvement. They therefore did not make provision for her overlapping spheres of influence which involve school, families and the community. In terms of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model it could be said that the participants did not relate parent involvement to the community in the exosystem or the national Department of Education in the macrosystem.

Participants identified benefits of parent involvement as well as several obstacles. The benefits corresponded to some of those mentioned in the literature review although they were limited in scope. The challenges that hindered parent involvement correlated to a large degree to those found in literature. Meaningful strategies to improve parent involvement were provided by the participants although a holistic approach that extends beyond the school and the family was not considered. This

aspect is addressed in the final chapter which provides a synthesis of the study and focuses on a summary, conclusions and recommendations.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SYNTHESIS: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter, which focuses on conclusions drawn from the analysed data presented in chapter four and recommendations aimed at bringing about meaningful management of parent involvement at the selected schools to improve their level of parent involvement, commences with a summary of previous chapters to ensure that it provides a coherent and holistic view of the research undertaken for this study.

#### **5.2 A SUCCINCT PRESENTATION OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS**

In this section key aspects pertaining to Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4, which respectively dealt with an introduction to research, a literature review which included the theoretical frameworks employed for this study, methodological issues and findings of the empirical research, are provided.

##### **5.2.1 Key aspects relating to the introduction to this study**

In the first chapter it was shown that parents' involvement in the formal education of their children, despite, the liberation of education in 1994, is still problematic (see Section 1.1 and Section 2.2.3). The researcher's view that this was also the case at schools in the Zeerust district of North West Province, prompted him to undertake this research. Even though the empirical study was limited to forty relevant participants related to two secondary schools, this dissertation could initiate extended, comprehensive research on parent involvement and the managing thereof in the Zeerust District, as well as initial research or more comprehensive research focusing on other areas in South Africa.

A literature study informed the research questions posed for the study. The main research question was formulated as follows: How can a meaningful management of parent involvement be brought about at selected secondary schools in the Zeersust district?

The sub-research questions were the following:

- What are the perceptions of parents, principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB parent members and active and inactive parents at selected schools in the Zeerust district concerning the concept of parent involvement?
- What are the ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children?
- What are the challenges and problems concerning parent involvement that need to receive managerial intervention?
- What are the benefits of parent involvement in the education of learners?
- What managerial recommendations can be made to improve parent involvement at the selected schools?

Although methodological issues are discussed in chapter 3, they were referred to in the first chapter to enable the reader to obtain an overview of the study as a whole. Important issues that were discussed are: the qualitative research approach, population and sampling, data collection methods, data analysis and trustworthiness. Considerations pertaining to ethics were also presented (see Sections 1.7.1, 1.7.2, 1.7.3, 1.8, 1.9 and 1.10).

## **5.2.2 Literature review**

In this chapter important aspects which relate to parent involvement and its management were discussed. Since the theoretical frameworks selected for this study, namely Epstein's theoretical frameworks concerning the overlapping of spheres of influence on parent involvement and her typology of parent involvement, as well as Bonfenbrenner's ecological model, constitute key components of any respected study on parent involvement and its management, they were presented as part of the literature review. Research conducted on parent involvement was integrated with Epstein's theories concerning parent involvement.

The key aspects covered in Chapter 2 were the following: an overview of parent involvement in South Africa which included problems experienced with parent involvement; the importance of parent involvement in terms of its key contributions, namely improved learner academic achievement, promotion of acceptable thought patterns and behaviour, and upliftment of communities (see Section 2.3.1); benefits of parent involvement to its key stakeholders, namely parents, learners, teachers and community (see Section 2.3.2); Epstein's theoretical frameworks of parent involvement, namely her initial theoretical model of parent involvement, her theory of overlapping spheres of influence and her typology of parent involvement (see Sections 2.4.1.1;

2.4.1.2; 2.4.1.3); Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (see Section 2.8); the scope of parent involvement (see Section 2.5); as well as strategies to increase parent involvement (see Section 2.7).

### **5.2.3 Methodological issues**

Chapter 3 provided a discussion of the components of the research design of the study. In this chapter it was argued that the qualitative research was appropriate for this study since it made provision for acquiring in-depth knowledge from relevant information-rich participants (see Section 3.2.1.2). Secondary schools were selected from those within the same social context in a specific geographical location to enable the researcher to conduct research within the parameters of a dissertation (see Section 3.2.1.2).

As shown in Section 3.2.1.3, a principal, an SGB chairperson, eight SGB parent participants from each school was selected by means of purposive sampling. The five active and inactive parents from each school were selected by making use of systematic sampling (see Section 3.2.1.3).

Individual interviews were deemed necessary to conduct with principals and SGB chairpersons for two reasons. Firstly, they would have views on parent involvement and its management at the selected schools based on their experiences as chief managers of their schools, and secondly, it would not be appropriate to interview them with any other group since their presence could influence other participants not to share their views on parent involvement and the management thereof freely (see Section 3.3.2.1). Separate focus group interviews were conducted with the following groups at each school: eight SGB members, five active parents, as well as five inactive parents. Active and inactive parents at each school were grouped separately for interviews so that inactive parents would not feel intimidated by active parents (see Section 3.3.2.2).

Data analysis was conducted in accordance with steps recommended by Creswell (see Section 3.4): data collection, transcriptions of interviews and reading of transcriptions to obtain a holistic view, coding of data in terms of themes, looking for trends and patterns, and interpretation of data with a view to writing a report.

Trustworthiness was obtained since the research was both valid and reliable as regards their meaning in terms of qualitative research. Since this study measured that which it was supposed to measure, made use of appropriate methods to answer the research questions, incorporated the principal of

triangulation and adhered to prescribed norms pertaining to ethics, it can be considered to be valid. It can also be considered to be reliable in qualitative terms since it applied appropriate data collection methods correctly and analysed data in accordance with acknowledged means, whilst the researcher continuously strived to remain objective (see Section 3.5).

#### **5.2.4 Presentation and discussions of findings**

In Chapter 4 the findings were presented in terms of participants' views on key aspects that relate to bringing about meaningful management of parent involvement: the meaning of the concept of parent involvement and the ways in which parents should be involved with schools, perceived benefits of parent involvement, its challenges, as well as strategies to overcome the challenges concerning parent involvement. Categories pertaining to the above themes, as well as sub-categories if deemed appropriate, were presented. Substantiation of themes and categories was provided by means of relevant views obtained from participants during the interviews.

- Concerning perceptions of the meaning of the concept of parent involvement, the following categories were discussed: varied initial perceptions of participants concerning the meaning of parent involvement, as well as the need to broaden perceptions of parent involvement to manage it optimally. In terms of ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education the following categories that emerged from the interviews were scrutinised: moulding of learners' behaviour, encouraging learners to attend schools, supervising homework, providing uniforms and transport, consulting teachers during open-book days, providing resources for teaching and learning, as well as attending school meetings and other events.
- The following benefits concerning parent involvement received attention: improved academic performance, improved provision of teaching and learning resources, improved relationships between parents and schools, as well as improved learner motivation and improved school attendance.
- In terms of challenges related to parent involvement, attention was paid to time constraints and poor communication between school and home as sub-categories in terms of physical hindrances as a category. Parents' lack of interest and commitment, principals' limitations in terms of managing parent involvement, parents' limited education, negative parental

attitudes, and negative teacher attitudes were considered as sub-categories pertaining to mind-centred hindrances that served as a category.

- Strategies to overcome challenges that were revealed during the interviews were discussed in relation to the following categories: organising workshops for parents, enhancing communication between school and home, establishing school guidelines on parent involvement, organising workshops for principals and teachers, reducing teacher-pupil ratios, facilitating programmes and events that accommodate parents at schools, as well as ensuring that messages from the school reach parents see (Section 4.3).

Matters mentioned in this section relate to the conclusion and recommendations that follow.

## **5.3 CONCLUSIONS**

Conclusions and recommendations relate to participants' perceptions of the concept of parent involvement and their views on how parent should be involved, the benefits of parent involvement, its challenges as well as strategies to improve parent involvement which enabled the researcher to provide recommendations that would improve parent involvement by means of improved management.

### **5.3.1 Participants' perceptions of the meaning of parent involvement and their views on how parents should be involved in their children's education**

Conclusions concerning perceptions of parent involvement and the ways in which it should find expression in terms of parents' involvement in their children's education are discussed in terms of two sub-sections. Firstly, the views of the active and inactive parents concerning these aspects are interpreted, and secondly, the views of participants in managerial positions, namely those of principals, SGB chairpersons and SGB parent members, concerning the mentioned aspects are considered. Readers should note that when mention is made of views relating to any participant group, such as, for example, SGB chairpersons and SGB parent members, it does not necessarily mean that all participants related to that particular group posited that particular view, but rather that the view was expressed in that group.

### **5.3.1.1 Active and inactive parents' perceptions of the meaning of parent involvement and their views on how parents should be involved in their children's education**

This research showed that active and inactive parents held different perceptions concerning the meaning of parent involvement.

Active parents' description of the concept of parent involvement showed that they held a broader view than inactive parents and considered parents' assistance of their children with homework as being part and parcel of parent involvement, even if they were not always capable of doing so (see Section 4.3.1.1). Their views on the meaning of the concept of parent involvement therefore accentuated Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at Home) according to Epstein's typology of parent involvement (see Sections 2.4.1.4 and 4.3.1.1). They also referred to Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) and Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering). If aspects concerning their views on how parents should be involved in the education of their children, that would bear relevance to the concept of parent involvement in terms of Epstein's typology of parent involvement, is taken into consideration, one can also say that their perception of parent involvement included Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting) (See Section 4.3.2).

It is interesting to note that active parents mentioned all the ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children that were identified from views expressed during the interviews that concerned this matter (see Section 4.3.2).

The majority of inactive parents were of the opinion that what happens at school does not concern them in their explanation of the meaning of parent involvement (see Section 4.3.1.1). Their views on the ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children primarily included the moulding of children's behaviour at home, encouraging school attendance, and the provision of uniforms and transport (see Sections 4.3.2.1, 4.3.2.2 and 4.3.2.4.) which also relate to Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting). It can, however, be said that inactive parents' long working hours, poor communication between school and home, limited educational background (see Tables 4.7 and 4.8) and the perceived negative attitude of teachers (see Section 4.3.4) could have contributed towards their restricted view of the concept of parent involvement and the ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children. Despite their rather passive stance in terms of Type 2 parent involvement (Communication), a few inactive parents did sometimes attend an open-book

meeting. The comment was also made that they would attend school events if they were notified (see Sections 4.3.2.5 and 4.3.4.2.2).

It could be said that inactive parents' view on parent involvement and what it entails correspond with Epstein's initial theoretical model of parent involvement which says, inter alia, that parents often separate the responsibilities of families and schools, and that parents often consider families and schools to have sequential responsibilities. The latter implies that while parents initially educate their children, the school becomes dominant once children start attending school (see Section 2.4.1.1).

Principals felt strongly that it was not fair for parents to surrender everything concerning the education of their children to the hands of teachers. Both SGB chairpersons expressed the general view that many parents lack a proper education which would have contributed meaningfully to the level of parent involvement (see Section 4.3.4.2.3).

Active parents emphasised Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home) in their descriptions of the meaning of the concept of parent involvement. They also alluded to Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) and Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering) in their explanation of the concept of parent involvement. If the ways in which parents should be involved in their children's education is taken into consideration, active parents also considered Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting) which can be considered as an extension of their understanding of the concept of parent involvement. Type 5 (Decision-making) and Type 6 (Collaboration with the Community) were not referred to in terms of active parents' explanation of the concept of parent involvement or the ways in which parents should be involved in the education of their children. One can therefore say that active parents' views on parent involvement were not comprehensive in terms of Epstein's typology of parents (see Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2).

In terms of the cooperation with the community in Bronfenbrenner's exosphere (see Section 2.8), a component which Epstein considers important for a more comprehensive view of parent involvement (see Section 2.4.1), no mention was made by either active or inactive parents during the interviews. It is therefore necessary that recommendations need to be made to broaden the perceptions of parent involvement and what it entails.

### **5.3.1.2 Principals', SGB chairpersons' and parent SGB members' perceptions of parent involvement and their views on how parents should be involved in their children's education**

The participants who found themselves in managerial positions at the selected schools, namely principals, SGB Chairpersons and SGB parent members, as was the case with active parents, emphasised Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home) in their descriptions of the concept of parent involvement (see Sections 2.4.1.4, 4.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.1).

Principals and SGB chairpersons, in addition to Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home), also alluded to aspects pertaining to Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting), Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) and Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering) in describing parent involvement; while SGB parent members also included Type 2 parent involvement (Communication) and Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering) (see Sections 4.3.1.1 and 4.3.1.2).

SGB parent members' answers to what the meaning of parent involvement is showed that their views included Type 2 parent involvement (Communication), Type 3 parent involvement (Volunteering) and Type 4 parent involvement (Learning at home) parent. If their view on the ways in which parents should become involved in parent involvement is taken into consideration as an extension of their view on the concept of parent involvement, Type 1 parent involvement (Parenting) could also be seen as being part of SGB parent members' understanding of the concept of parent involvement.

It is noteworthy that participants involved in school management neglected Type 5 parent involvement (Decision-making) and Type 6 parent involvement (Collaboration with the Community) describing their perceptions of the meaning of the concept of parent involvement, as well their views on how parents should be involved in the education of their children:. The fact that they did not refer to Type 5 (decision-making), may possibly be attributed to their taking it for granted since they were involved in decision-making in SGBs.

### **5.3.2 Benefits of parent involvement**

It was found that information obtained on the benefits of parent involvement shows similarity with those mentioned in the chapter dealing with the literature study (see Section 4.3.3).



- **Improved academic achievement**

Principals, SGB chairpersons and parent SGB members mentioned this benefit. This view is in accordance with that of Hill and Taylor (see Section 2.3.1.1). As mentioned in section 4.3.3, active parents in all probability did not consider it necessary to mention this obvious advantage of parent involvement, whilst inactive parents' silence concerning academic achievement as a benefit of parent involvement stemmed from their belief that the formal education of their children is solely the task of schools.

- **Improved provision of teaching and learning resources**

Only principals identified this benefit when asked about the advantages of parent involvement. The fact that active parents did not mention this benefit could possibly be that they took it for granted that it was their duty to provide stationery, while inactive parents possibly thought that it was the government's duty to provide teaching and learning resources to schools (see Sections 2.3.2.2, 4.3.2.6, 4.3.3.2 and 4.3.4.2.4). Principals were most probably very aware of this benefit as they felt that the government could not afford to provide all the necessary teaching and learning resources for learners. Parents, according to them, had to contribute in this regard (see Section 4.3.3.2).

- **Improved relationship between parents and school**

Principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB members and active parents from both schools articulated that they believed that the benefit of an improved relationship between parents and schools could be linked to parent involvement. They pointed out that if parents are involved in their children's formal education, the relationship between parents and teachers would assist teachers and principals to experience a higher morale and job satisfaction (see Sections 2.3.2.3 and 4.3.3.3). As mentioned in Section 2.4.1.4, children who are aware that their parents have a good relationship with teachers, tend to behave well. An improved relationship between parents and schools was not identified by inactive parents because they had probably seldom, if ever, experienced it.

- **Improved learner motivation and improved school attendance**

Improved learner motivation, learner behaviour and improved school attendance were identified by active parents, principals, SGB chairpersons and SGB members. However, this benefit was not identified by inactive parents (see Section 4.3.3.4).

As mentioned, the information obtained from the participants concerning the benefits of parent involvement also appeared in the literature study undertaken for this study (see Section 2.3.2). However, the benefits mentioned in Chapter 2 are much more comprehensive.

### **5.3.3 Challenges of parent involvement**

The research established that there were quite a number of factors that impacted negatively on parent involvement. The following were identified as challenges of parent involvement in this research (see Sections 2.6.1 and 4.3.4):

- Time constraints
- Poor communication between school and home
- Parents` lack of interest and commitment
- Principals` limited knowledge of the concept of parent involvement
- Parents` limited formal education
- Poor communication between school and home
- Negative parent involvement

#### **5.3.3.1 Time constraints**

It was found that time constraints constitute a major obstacle to parent involvement. A lack of time would be especially problematic for economically disadvantaged parents because their jobs usually do not promote flexibility in terms of working hours which has become a characteristic of professional occupations. Not only did the majority of inactive parents claim that they did not attend school functions due to work commitments, they also said that they did not have time to help their children with their homework (see Sections 2.6.1 and 4.3.4.1). Of course, abstaining from assisting

children with homework can also be linked to parents' educational backgrounds (see Sections 4.3.4.2.3 and 5.3.3.2).

### **5.3.3.2 Poor communication between home and school**

The poor communication between school and home was mentioned by all interview groupings: principals, SGB chairpersons, SGB parent members, active parents and inactive parents (see Section 4.3.4.1.2). This implies that improving communication between school and home should be considered very important for improving parent involvement (see Section 4.3.4.1.2).

Many active and inactive parents held the view that schools were not communicating with them effectively since they complained of not receiving school messages. Parents believed that schools had to use a variety of communication media (see Section 4.3.4.1.2).

### **5.3.3.3 Parent`s lack of interest and commitment**

Lack of interest and commitment was found to be a significant factor that limited parent involvement (see Section 4.3.4.2.1). Principals, SGB chairpersons and SGB parent members agreed that this issue was indeed serious. Lack of interest and commitment by parents is a serious shortcoming in terms of parent involvement since it could lead to the demoralisation of fellow parents, as well as learners.

### **5.3.3.4 Principals` limited knowledge concerning parent involvement**

From this study's empirical research it can be concluded that principals` limited knowledge concerning the management of parent involvement is considered to impact negatively on the realisation of parent involvement. This view became apparent from opinions aired by SGB chairpersons, SGB member parents, active parents and even inactive parents. It was shown that if principals do not provide a climate conducive to parent involvement, parents would not feel free to participate in school activities (see Section 4.3.4.2.2). Dissatisfaction with management of parent involvement by principals can possibly partly be ascribed to inadequate tertiary training that Principal A underwent, or no training in parent involvement, as was the case with Principal B. Criticism iterated in terms of aspects that relate to the management of parent involvement shows that there is certainly room for improvement. Principals themselves believed that their management of parent involvement could be improved (see Section 4.3.4.2.2).

#### **5.3.3.5 Parents' limited education**

It was found that parents' limited education was a challenge to parent involvement at the selected schools. This was particularly relevant for inactive parents. Parents' views revealed that their limited education hindered them from being effective when it came to helping their children with school work. Some parents were very open about this aspect (see Section 4.3.4.2).

#### **5.3.3.6 Negative parental attitudes**

The view that negative attitudes were an obstacle to parent involvement was supported by principals, SGB chairpersons and SGB member parents. Parents' negative attitudes were revealed in different ways, which even included keeping children from partaking in school functions. It was also observed that some parents left everything concerning their children's formal education to teachers since they considered it their task. Some inactive parents did not provide their children with pens for writing since they expected the government to provide everything needed for the formal education of their children (see Section 4.3.4.2.4).

Negative attitudes experienced by inactive parents probably found expression in their decision not to attend school events which included meetings at schools and open-book days. Their excuses, such as work commitments (see Section 4.3.4.1.1), could possibly not always be true. Inactive parents did not mention financial constraints in terms of their absence from school events.

#### **5.3.3.7 Negative teacher attitudes**

As shown in Section 4.3.4.2.5, some parents considered teachers' negative attitudes to be a challenge that negatively affected their involvement with schools. They believed that teachers did not treat them with respect. Some parents even believed that teachers did not want to communicate with them concerning their children's formal education. Teachers were considered to treat parents, who they regarded as being uneducated and incapable of being involved in learners' formal education, with contempt. The perceived negative attitudes of teachers, which made parents' feel unworthy, were seen as the reason for not giving parents the opportunity to express their concerns regarding their children's formal education. Principals thought that teachers' perceived negative attitudes could be attributed to their heavy workloads. Principals also pointed out that the number of parents who teachers were supposed to accommodate was too big (see Section 4.3.4.2).

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations that follow bear the above conclusions of this study in mind. Views obtained from participants concerning strategies that would improve the management of parent involvement (See Section 4.3.5) were incorporated if deemed necessary.

### **5.4.1 Perceptions of parent involvement and what it should entail**

Concerning the inadequate perceptions and knowledge of parent involvement and what it involves, managerial intervention is required. Inadequate knowledge of what parent involvement is and what it entails would negatively influence the management thereof.

To manage improving the perception of what parent involvement means and what it entails, all three systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model should be integrated in a synergetic manner. It is therefore strongly recommended that the national Department of Basic Education, which finds itself in Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem, makes the promotion of parent involvement a priority. Parent involvement being debated at national level will promote the recommendations pertaining to the exo- and microsystem that follow in the following paragraphs of this section.

It is recommended that the curricula of all tertiary educational institutions that offer programmes for prospective teachers or teaching teachers and education managers include learning material that contains the latest relevant information on parent involvement and the management thereof. This means that tertiary educational institutions, that find themselves in Bronfenbrenner's exosystem, have an important role to play. The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) appointed by the Council of Higher Education (CHE) in the Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem (see Section 2.8) should maintain, and establish, if necessary, regular periods of controlling whether content of curricula of tertiary institutions is up to date.

Parent involvement workshops should be organised by the provincial Departments of Basic Education in the exosystem, under the auspices of the national Department of Education in the macrosystem, in collaboration with specialists in the field of parent involvement at tertiary educational institutions. Suitable lecturers would be willing to become involved in parent involvement management training as such involvement could constitute part of their community engagement responsibility. If deemed necessary, the provincial Departments of Basic Education

could arrange for selected school personnel from different schools, which could include SGB chairpersons and school management teams, to collectively attend such training workshops. The Departments should make the written content of the workshop available to attendees.

Attendees of the workshops on parent involvement and the management thereof should present them at their schools, applying the democratic leadership approach to ensure a free flow of communication. Administrative personnel should also undergo relevant training at schools since they need to be made conscious of the significance of parent involvement and their importance in promoting a friendly and cooperative climate at schools.

Schools should also undertake training for parents in the microsystem, conducted by suitably trained school personnel. This would establish, maintain and/or further mesosystemic interaction between schools and parents in the microsystem, as it would between the parent and the child who finds him/herself at the centre of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system (see Section 2.8).

It is accentuated that only an integrated and comprehensive view of parent involvement and the management thereof, as implied by Bronfenrenner's ecological model, in conjunction with Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, and her theory on the typology of parents (see Sections 2.4.1.2 and 2.4.1.3), would accelerate improved parent involvement by means of the improved management thereof.

The community should become involved in promoting parent involvement. Well known and respected members and non-governmental associations in the community, in the exosystem, can play an important role in making parents of learners aware of the importance of parent involvement and encourage them to attend parent involvement programmes offered by schools. People in the community that are either knowledgeable or know people who are knowledgeable in terms of aspects, such as motivation of children, developmental phases of the child, and basic management principles, should, in conjunction with the school or community organisations, present informal talks and/or facilitate discussions with parents.

#### **5.4.2 Benefits of parent involvement**

The fact that the many parents at the selected schools do not engage with schools and consider parent involvement as taking care of children's basic needs, such as the provision of school uniforms and

transport, accentuates the need for adult education in terms of the benefits of parent involvement. The community needs to be conscientised in terms of the benefits of parent involvement. Once again, prominent leaders in the society can play an important role in this regard, especially if they cooperate with widely read local papers, popular radio talk shows and owners of notice boards to get the message of the importance and the benefits of parent involvement across.

As regard the benefits of parent involvement, identified from information collected during interviews, namely academic performance, improved provision of teaching and learning resources, improved relationships between parents and school, increased teacher motivation, improved learner motivation, improved learner behaviour, and improved school attendance (see Section 4.3.3), as well as additional benefits covered in the literature review mentioned (see Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2), it is recommended that they be incorporated in training organised by the provincial Departments as mentioned in Section 5.4.1. Of course, the benefits of parent involvement would also form part of the relevant curricula at tertiary educational institutions. It should become known nationwide that parent involvement is a key aspect, not only in improving school performance, but also in contributing towards the social and economic development of South Africa as a whole.

### **5.4.3 Parent involvement challenges**

Many of the inadequacies relating to parent involvement could be resolved by taking action in accordance with the recommendations provided in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

Concerning the lack of time experienced by parents, it is recommended that schools choose times for parental contact that would be most suitable for all parents. Schools could possibly consider having open-book days and other functions that involve parents on Saturdays since attending school functions during the week is impossible for many working parents. Once parents have attended school functions where they become aware of the influence that they have on their children's development, many could become partners in a meaningful mesosystemic interaction with schools.

As regards poor communication between school and home, it is recommended that schools investigate alternative strategies of communication with parents to establish co-ownership of schools and trust between the two parties. Such communication should transcend unilateral dictation by schools which are not conducive to good relations characterised by trust. A possible means of communication which should be considered for two-way interaction between schools and parents is

SMS texting which has become a popular and relatively cheap manner of communication. School programmes should be displayed on notice boards of places that are often frequented, such as shops and community associations. If schools and communities work together to emphasise the importance of parent involvement, mesosystemic interaction between homes and schools will improve.

To further communication between schools and homes, schools should ensure that a positive climate is established between parents and schools in order to break down barriers. Friendly and helpful administrative school personnel, who welcome parents when they visit the schools, would do much to improve communication between school and home. Committees consisting of principals, selected SGB members and teachers who are convinced of the significance of parent involvement, should generate communication strategies aimed at parents taking co-ownership of schools.

Parents' lack of interest and commitment and their negative attitudes can be combated by ensuring friendly and effective communication as mentioned above. Informal training would, as is the case for changing the perceptions of parent involvement and what it entails, as well as making the benefits of parent involvement known, should also play a significant role in addressing parents' lack of interest and commitment. Well-advertised informal training should, inter alia, focus on the following topics: supporting and assisting children with homework without knowledge of school subjects or any particular qualifications; motivation of children; basic management principles: time schedules for homework: meaningful opportunities for learners to relax; the value of honest discussions between parents and children which relate to their children's success and misfortunes at school; and ways of finding useful information that concerns topics of school subjects. Community associations should be encouraged by schools and provincial Departments of Education to provide informal parent involvement programmes, aimed at parents who feel that they are not ready to undergo training presented by schools.

Negative teacher attitudes, or at least the perception of negative attitudes of teachers held by parents, should be addressed by training. As mentioned, teachers could interact informally with parents by unobtrusive means such as SMS texting. Teachers can change parents' negative attitudes towards them by showing empathy and respect, irrespective of parents' level of formal education. Knowledge acquired by teachers through workshops and seminars will help to promote mutual understanding, cooperation and respect.



## **5.5 OVERALL RECOMMENDATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

- It is recommended that the national Department of Education establish a unit which supervises a scrutiny of completed research on parent involvement and the management thereof by provincial Departments of Education. Provincial Departments of Education should determine the transferability of research findings concerning selected schools to other schools.
- Comprehensive knowledge concerning the phenomenon of parent involvement and the management thereof should inform the compilation of a national policy on parent involvement which is much needed in South Africa.
- Research on specific problematic aspects concerning parent involvement, rather than issues that concern parent involvement as a whole, should be conducted so that a more detailed view of the problematic phenomenon of parent involvement can be obtained to improve the management thereof. In this regard, research on communication between home and school, involving parents with limited formal education, and learners' and ex-learners' views on parent involvement should be conducted.

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## APPENDIX I

### PROOF OF REGISTRSTION



0802 MIRST

CHARAMBA M MR  
MOTSWEDI HIGH SCHOOL  
PRIVATE BAG X 1002  
MOTSWEDI  
2870

STUDENT NUMBER : 4664-792-9

ENQUIRIES NAME : POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS  
ENQUIRIES TEL : (012) 441-5702

DATE : 2016-04-12

Dear Student

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the academic year indicated below. Kindly activate your Unisa mylife (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portal>) account for future communication purposes and access to research resources. Please check the information below and kindly inform the Master's and doctoral section on [mandd@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mandd@unisa.ac.za) on any omissions or errors.

DEGREE : MED (EDUC MANAGEMENT) (98405)  
TITLE : The management of parent involvement in secondary schools in the Zeerust district, North West Province  
SUPERVISOR : Prof AE VAN ZYL  
ACADEMIC YEAR : 2016  
TYPE: DISSERTATION  
SUBJECTS REGISTERED: DPEDU95 M ED - EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

If you intend submitting your dissertation/thesis for examination, complete form DSAR20 (Notice of Intention to Submit) before 30 September. If this deadline is not met, you need to re-register and submit your intention for submission by 15 April and submit your dissertation by 15 June.

Your supervisor's written consent for submission must accompany your notice of intention to submit.

Yours faithfully,

Prof G Zide  
Registrar

## APPENDIX II

### A LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY



03-04-2014

To: North West Department of Education

Dear Sir/Madam

I herewith state that Mr Madirayi Charamba (student number 46647929) is registered for the Master's degree in Education management and that I am supervising the writing of his dissertation entitled *The management of parent involvement in secondary schools in the Zeerust District, North West Province*. I am of the opinion that his research will make a meaningful contribution in promoting the level and quality of parent involvement at schools.

I hereby support Mr Charamba's application to conduct research of a limited scope at the *Motswedi High School* and the *Zeerust Combined Secondary School*. It will not have any effect on teaching time. Individual interviews with the principals of the schools, the two principals, the two SGB chairpersons and focus group interviews with parent SGB members and a limited number of approximately five active and five inactive parents are envisaged. Each interview should not exceed half an hour.

Your cooperation in this regard will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AE van Zyl", is written over a series of dotted lines.

PROF AE VAN ZYL  
Department of Educational Leadership and Management  
University of South Africa  
[vzylae@unisa.ac.za](mailto:vzylae@unisa.ac.za)  
Tel: 012-4294036



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

## APPENDIX III

### CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



#### Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

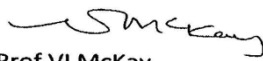
This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**M Charamba [46647929]**

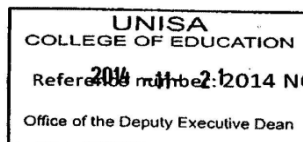
for a MEd study entitled

**The management of parent involvement in secondary schools in Zeerust District,  
North West province**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa  
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two  
years from the date of issue.

  
Prof VI McKay  
Acting Executive Dean: CEDU

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



17 NOVEMBER 2014

## APPENDIX 1V

### LETTER TO ZEERUST DISTRICT TO CONDUCT RESEASRCH

Motswedi High School

Private Bag X1002

Motswedi

2870

17 April 2014

The Circuit Manager  
Zeerust Area Office  
Welbedacht  
Zeerust

Dear Sir/Madam

**Request for permission to conduct research at your secondary schools**

I am an Educator at Motswedi High School and I am currently in my final year for my Masters in Education Degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA). I hereby request for permission to conduct an educational research at Motswedi High School and Zeerust Combined Secondary in the Zeerust District.

The title of my research is:

***The management of parent involvement in secondary schools in the Zeerust District, North West Province.***

The purpose of this research is to find out the level and quality of parent involvement in secondary schools. The findings of the research in my opinion will make a meaningful contribution in promoting the level and quality of parent involvement at schools.

Yours faithfully



Charamba Madirayi



## APPENDIX V

### PERMISSION LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE)

**education**

Lefapha la Thuto la Bokone Bophirima  
Noordwes Departement van Onderwys  
North West Department of Education  
**NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

Welbedacht,  
Zeerust

Tel.: (018) 363-5900

Cell: 003 675 1356

e-mail: mokoenas@nwpg.gov.za

**OFFICE OF THE AREA MANAGER: RAMOTSHERE MOILAO AREA OFFICE  
NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT**

30 APRIL 2014

FOR ATTENTION: MOTSWEDI HIGH SCHOOL

: ZEERUST COMBINED SECONDARY SCHOOL

DEAR SIR/MADAM

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Please be informed that Mr Charamba Madirayi has been given permission to conduct research at your schools as he is busy with his Masters in Education Degree with UNISA.

See attached correspondence based on his research.

Yours in Education

  
Z. Cassim

Circuit Manager Motswedi

## APPENDIX VI

### LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Motswedi High School

Private Bag X1002

Motswedi2870

22 August 2014

The Principal

Motswedi High School

#### **Request for an interview**

I am an Educator at Motswedi High School and I am currently in my final year for my Masters in Education Degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am asking for permission to conduct an educational research at your School. I hereby request to interview the members of the school community, namely the principal, SGB chairperson, parents in the SGB and five active and five inactive parents. The intended period of the research is between 15 September and 30 September 2014.

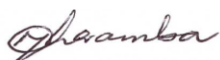
The title of my research is:

***The management of parent involvement at selected secondary schools in the Zeerust District, North West Province.***

The purpose of this research is to find out the level and quality of parent involvement in secondary schools. The findings of the research in my opinion will make a meaningful contribution in promoting the level and quality of parent involvement at schools.

Your kind assistance in granting me permission to carry out the interviews and allowing me to obtain the required information will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully



Charamba Madirayi

## APPENDIX VII

### LETTER TO SGB MEMBERS

**Dear study participants,**

I am an educator at Motswedi High School and I am currently in my final year for my Masters in Education Degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA). The purpose of this Focus Group Discussion/interview is to collect data for the fulfilment of my thesis entitled:

***The management of parent involvement at selected secondary schools in the Zeerust District, North West Province.***

Your school has been selected as a study site for the research. The concerned management body of your school has been informed about the study through the request letter from University of South Africa dated 03/04/2014. They were also clearly informed by the researcher about the aim of the study and its contribution to the schools. Based on this, the Department of Education dated 30/04/2014 has also given the researcher a permit letter dated 30/04/2014 (They will be shown a copy of the letter of permit).

The information and response you provide in the discussion will be vital for the success of the study. Your response to the discussion will be used strictly for the study only; your anonymity and privacy will be kept confidential indefinitely. Therefore, feel free and give your genuine information for the discussion points. Because I do not want to miss any of your information and need your confirmation I will digitally record, transcribe and translate it into English and show it to you before I use the data for the research purpose. You are free not to respond to any question you don't feel comfortable to talk about; and you are also free to refrain and withdraw from the study anytime when you do not feel comfortable during the research process.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and time!

Yours faithfully



Charamba Madirayi

## **APPENDIX VIII**

### **LETTER TO PARENTS**

Motswedi High School

Private Bag X1002

Motswedi

2870

22 August 2014

Dear Parents

#### **Request for an interview**

I am an Educator at Motswedi High School and I am currently in my final year for my Masters in Education Degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA). I hereby request to have an interview with you. The intended period of the research is between 15 September and 30 September 2014.

The title of my research is:

***The management of parent involvement at selected secondary schools in the Zeerust District, North West Province.***

The purpose of this research is to find out the level and quality of parent involvement in secondary schools. The findings of the research in my opinion will make a meaningful contribution in promoting the level and quality of parent involvement at schools.

Your kind assistance in granting me permission to interview you and allowing me to obtain the required information will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully



Charamba Madirayi

## **APPENDIX IX**

### **CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS**

#### **Participants' consent to participate in research**

Knowing that the information I will provide is for research purpose only, and that my identity will remain anonymous in the final work, I undertake to participate in the research subject to the code of conduct outlined in the letter by the researcher. I undertake that participation is voluntary that I may withdraw from the research at any time when I do not feel comfortable with the research process.

Name .....

Signed.....

Date.....

## **APPENDIX X**

### **FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

#### 1) Introductions

1. Explaining how a focus group discussion (FGD) will work.
2. Explaining what a focus is and will be discussed.
  - The FGD is interested in your view points; you represent many people who may have similar views.
  - This is a research study and just want your perceptions
  - Talk to one another not me alone
  - All answers are correct and different opinions are accommodated
  - All people talks and no hand raising
3. The discussion to be recorded and privacy is assured
4. Role of the researcher is to facilitate the discussion by making sure everyone participate
5. Ground rules
  - No confusing words
  - Speaking in turns
  - No wandering
6. Discussions
7. Conclusion
8. Thanking the participants

## **APPENDIX XI**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPALS**

To be completed by the participant to the interview

#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Names ..... (to be coded later anonymity)

Age.....

Gender.....

Marital Status.....

Teaching experience:.....

Years of experience as principal:.....

Home language:.....

Highest qualification.....

Workshops on Parent Involvement:.....

## **APPENDIX XII**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR SGB CHAIRPERSONS**

To be completed by the participant to the interview

#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Names ..... (to be coded later anonymity)

Age.....

Gender.....

Marital Status.....

Qualification.....

Number of years as SGB Chairperson:.....

Workshops on Parent Involvement:.....



## **APPENDIX XIII**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR SGB MEMBERS**

To be completed by the participant to the interview

#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Names ..... (to be coded later anonymity)

Age.....

Gender.....

Marital Status.....

Qualification.....

Number of years as SGB member:.....

Workshops on Parent Involvement:.....

## **APPENDIX XIV**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ACTIVE AND INACTIVE PARENTS**

To be completed by the participant to the interview

#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Names ..... (to be coded later anonymity)

Age.....

Gender.....

Marital Status.....

Employment:.....

Qualification.....

Numbers of children in the school:.....

School meetings attended in 2014:.....

Workshops on Parent Involvement:.....

## **APPENDIX XV**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS**

1. Have you attended any workshop on the management of parent involvement?
2. What is your understanding of the term parent involvement?
3. How do you think should parents be involved in the education of their children?
4. What do you think are the benefits of parent involvement?
5. Do you consider parent involvement to be successful at your school?
6. What are the problems that affect parent involvement negatively?
7. What form of communication do you usually use with parents in the school? How often do you communicate with them?
8. What can be done to improve parent involvement be improved at your school?

## **APPENDIX XVI**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SGB CHAIRPERSONS**

1. As the SGB chairperson, in a managerial position, have you attended any workshop on the improvement of parent involvement?
2. What do you understand by the term parent involvement in children's education?
3. How should parents be involved in the education of their children?
4. What are the advantages of parent involvement?
5. Have you ever organised workshops for parents on parent involvement?
6. How should parents be involved in parent education at your school?
7. How do you communicate with the parents? How can communication with parents be improved at school?
8. What are the barriers to parent involvement at this school?
9. What strategies can be employed to improve parent involvement?

## **APPENDIX XVII**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SGB MEMBERS**

1. What is your perception of parent involvement in education?
2. How should parent be involved in the education of their children? How are you involved in the education of your children?
3. What do you think are the benefits of parent involvement?

4. How do you usually communicate with parents?
5. How do you consider the state of parent involvement at this school?
6. What are the challenges and problems faced by parents on parent involvement at this school?
7. In what ways can parent involvement be improved at schools?

## **APPENDIX XVIII**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ACTIVE AND INACTIVE PARENTS**

1. What is your understanding of parent involvement in education?
2. How should you as parents be involved in the education of your children?
3. What are some of the challenges and problems that you face as a parent in terms of parent involvement?
4. Do you think it is a good idea to be involved in the learning of your child?
5. Do you usually attend school functions? How often are these meetings held?
6. How does the school communicate with parents?
7. What strategies can be employed in schools to improve parent involvement?