

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11  
GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I, JUSTIN TAFADZWA TAFAMOMBE hereby declare that **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11 GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO** is my work and that all the sources cited or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further state that not a fraction of this presentation has previously been submitted to UNISA or any other institution for examination purposes.



SIGNATURE

DATE: 18 July 2022

JUSTIN TAFADZWA TAFAMOMBE

## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my wife, Ndaka, and children, Ruvarashe and Tafara, who had to endure a life devoid of everyday love from a husband and father as I sometimes had to lock myself in the library working towards the completion of this work. Despite my occasional withdrawal from family routine play time, they continued to support me and encourage me throughout the research endeavour. Their love is priceless and highly appreciated.

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- Dr ST Ngobeni took over as my supervisor and demanded the best out of me. He was also there offering support and guidance throughout the process. I will always be appreciative of such selfless contribution.
- My wife, Ndaka, is always a special person in my life. She sometimes considers my work as hers. This woman was always there to offer support and would even accompany me to the library.
- I am also indebted to my daughter, Ruvarashe, and son, Tafara. The two were always there giving support even when the body and mind felt tired.
- My uncle David also deserves special mention. Being an academic himself, he never allowed me to settle for the *status quo* as an option but pushed me to look over the horizon.
- My mother remains a pillar of strength despite the geographical distance between us.
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- Last, but not least, I wish to express my gratitude to the Gauteng Department of Education for having granted permission for the research to be conducted in schools under its jurisdiction.

## **ABSTRACT**

The relevance of parental involvement in the education of learners is no longer considered to be a matter subject for further debate. There is tremendous evidence that confirms that parental involvement is a critical ingredient in the education of learners. It is, however, recorded that most parents, and, in particular, those from among the low socio-economic strata are rarely fully involved in the education of their children. This research study has aimed at investigating the causes of the lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners.

The main research question pertained to what the causes of the lack of parental involvement among the progressed learners are. Progressed learners are learners who are allowed to proceed to the next grade despite having failed to meet the minimum promotional requirements.

To answer the main research question, an interpretivist paradigm was adopted. The research was exclusively qualitative in nature and used a phenomenology research design. Six learners from three different schools and their parents were purposively sampled to take part in the investigation. Three educators, one from each of the three schools teaching Geography to the progressed learners, also participated during the investigation. All participants were involved via video recorded interviews lasting between 20 to 40 minutes.

The comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnership by Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon, (1997) was used as the theoretical framework that guided this research. After data collection, the explication method recommended by Groenewald (2004) was used during the data analysis stage.

The results from the interviews were analysed and evaluated against the framework of Epstein et al (1997). The interviews showed that the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed learners are multi-faceted. They range from poor parenting methods that sometimes lead to dysfunctional families, poor communication between the schools and the parents, and to unclear government policies on strategies to involve parents. Schools themselves also appeared to be posing a stumbling block in parental involvement with parents accusing teachers of being disrespectful towards parents. Improved communication between schools and parents is recommended to enhance more parental involvement.

## **ISIHLOKO:**

### **UKUZIBANDAKANYA KWABAZALI KANYE NABAFUNDI BEBANGA LE-11 ABADLULISIWE KUJOGRAFI ESOWETO.**

#### **Isifingo**

Ukufaneleka kokubandakanyeka kwabazali emfundweni yabafundi akusabhekwa njengento okusazoqhubeka kudingidwe ngayo. Kunobufakazi obuningi obuqinisekisa ukuzibandakanya kwabazali njengesithako esibalulekile emfundweni yabafundi. Nokho, kuqoshwe phansi ukuthi iningi labazali, futhi ikakhulukazi labo abavela ezigabeni eziphansi zenhlalo-mnotho, abavamile ukuzibandakanya ngokugcwele emfundweni yezingane zabo. Lolu cwaningo luhlose ukuphenya ngezimbangela zokungabi bikho kokuzibandakanya kwabazali phakathi kwabafundi abadlulisiwe bebanga le-11 beJografi futhi le nhloso yabonakala embuzweni omkhulu wocwaningo. Abafundi abadlulisiwe ngabafundi abavunyelwe ukudlulela ebangeni elilandelayo, naphezu kokuba behlulekile ukuhlangabezana nezidingo ezincane zokukhushulwa. Kwamukelwa ipharadigm yokutolika ukuze iphendule umbuzo oyinhloko wocwaningo. Lolu cwaningo beluluhle kakhulu ngokwendalo futhi lusebenzise idizayini yocwaningo lwefinominoloji. Abafundi abayisithupha bezikole ezintathu ezahlukene bathathwe ngenhloso ukuba ngamasampu;a wokuthi babambe iqhaza ophenyweni nabazali bomfundi ngamunye othintekayo. Othisha abathathu - oyedwa esikoleni ngasinye kwezintathu - abafundisa iJografi kubafundi abadlulisiwe nabo babambe iqhaza ocwaningweni. Bonke ababambiqhaza bahambele inhlokhono eqoshwe phansi ngevidiyo ethatha phakathi kwemizuzu engama-20 nengama-40.

Uhlaka olubanzi lwesikole, umndeni kanye nokubambisana komphakathi luka-Epstein, uCoates, uSalinas, uSanders, noSimon (1997) lusetshenziswe njengohlaka lwethiyori oluqondisa lolu cwaningo. Ngemuva kokuqoqwa kwemininingwane, indlela yokuchaza eyatuswa uGroenewald (2004) yasetshenziswa ngesikhathi sokuhlaziya imininingwane. Imiphumela evela ezingxoxweni yahlaziywa futhi yahlolwa ngokumelene nohlaka lwe-Epstein et al. (1997). Izingxoxo zakhombisa izimbangela zokungabi bikho kokuzibandakanya kwabazali phakathi kwabafundi abadlulisiwe ukuze zibe nezici eziningi. Zisuka ezindleleni ezingezinhle zokukhulisa izingane ngezinye izikhathi eziholela emindenini engasebenzi kahle nokungakhulumisani kahle

phakathi kwesikole nomzali kuze kufike ekungacacini kwemigomo kahulumeni ngamasu okubandakanya abazali. Izikole nazo zibonakale zifaka imigoqo ekuzibandkanyeni kwabazali njengoba abazali besola othisha ngokungabahloniphi. Ukuxhumana okuthuthukisiwe phakathi kwezikole nabazali kuyanconywa ukuze kugqugquzelwe ukuzibandakanya kwabazali okwengeziwe.



## **SEHLOHO:**

### **HO NKA SEABO HA BATSWADI LE BARU TWANA BA GEOGRAPHY BA TSWELANG PELE KEREITING YA 11 SOWETO**

#### **Kgutsufatso**

Bohlokwa ba ho kenya letsoho ha batswadi thutong ya barutwana ha e sa nkwa e le taba eo ho ka buisanwang ka yona ho ya pele Ho na le bopaki bo bongata bo tiisang hore batswadi ba nka karolo e le karolo ya bohlokwa thutong ya barutwana. Leha ho le jwalo, ho tlalehilwe hore batswadi ba bangata, haholoholo ba tswang maemong a tlaase a moruo wa setjhaba, ke ka sewelo ba amehang ka botlalo thutong ea bana ba Dipatlisiso tsena di reretswe ho batlisisa disosa tsa kgaello ya ho ba le seabo ha batsoadi hara barutwana ba ntseng ba tswela pele ba sehlopha sa 11 sa Geography mme sepheo sena se ile sa bonahala potsong ya sehlooho ya dipatlisiso. Baithuti ba tswetseng pele ke baithuti ba dumelletsweng ho tswela pele ho ya sehlopheng se latelang, leha ba hlotswe ho fihlella ditlhoko tse tlase tsa ho phahamiswa. Ho ile ha amohelwa paradigm ya ho toloka ho araba potso ya mantlha ya dipatlisiso. Patlisiso e ne e le ya boleng bo hodimo feela mme e sebedisitse moralo wa dipatlisiso tsa moralo wa dipatlisiso wa phenomenology. Barutwana ba tsheletseng ho tswa dikolong tse tharo tse fapaneng ba ile ba etswa disampole ka sepheo sa ho nka karolo dipatlisisong hammoho le batswadi ba morutwana e mong le e mong ya amehang. Matitjhere a mararo - a le mong ho tswa ho se seng le se seng sa dikolo tse tharo - ba rutang thuto ya Geography ho barutwana ba hatelang pele le bona ba nkile karolo thutong. Bankaseabo bohle ba bile teng dipuisanong tse rekotilweng ka video tse nkang metsotso e 20 ho isa ho e 40.

Moralo o felletseng wa tshebedisanommoho ya sekolo, lelapa le setjhaba ho latela Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, le Simon (1997) o sebedisitse e le moralo wa teore o tataisang dipatlisiso tsena. Ka morao ha pokello ya lesedi ho ile ha sebediswa mokgwa o hlahosang o sisintsweng ke Groenewald (2004) nakong ya manollo ya ditaba. Sephetho sa dipuisano se ile sa hlahlojwa le ho hlahlojwa kgahlano le moralo wa Epstein et al. (1997). Diinthavu di bontshitse disosa tsa kgaello ya ho kenya letsoho ha batswadi hara barutwana ba tswetseng pele ho ba le dikarolo tse ngata. Di fapana ho tloha mekgweng e mebe ya ho hodisa bana eo ka dinako tse ding e lebisang

malapeng a sa sebitseng le puisano e fokolang pakeng tsa sekolo le motswadi ho ya ho melaotheo e sa hlakang ya mmuso mabapi le maano a ho kenyelletsa batswadi. Dikolo le tsona di ne di bonahala di le kgopiso ho batswadi ba bona, Batswadi ba qosa matitjhere ka ho se ba hlomphe. Puisano e ntlafetseng pakeng tsa dikolo le batswadi e kgothaletswa ho kenya letsoho haholwanyane ha batswadi.

## **KEY WORDS**

**Parental involvement**

**Academic performance**

**Grade 11 geography**

**Explication of data**

**Phenomenology**

**Qualitative**

**Interpretivist**

**Progressed**

**Bracketing**

**Investigation**

**Research paradigm**

**Parentification**

**Phenomenological reduction**

**Purposive sampling**

**Soweto**

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The past two decades have seen an increasing amount of interest among researchers in the effects of parental involvement on the academic performance of learners from primary grades right through to tertiary level. Many researchers, among them Meier and Lemmer (2015), Pricilah, Nyang'au and Chang'ach (2014) and Morolong and Naong (2011), generally regard Epstein et al (1997) as the universally acclaimed god-father of research on parental involvement in learner education. The theory by Epstein et al (1997) has continued to be used as the building cornerstone on which most research work on parental involvement in learner achievement is founded.

The theory by Epstein on parental involvement supposes that children learn from three distinct spheres, namely the family, school and the community. These three spheres can be drawn together and work closely for the maximum benefit of the child. Conversely the three spheres can also be pushed apart sadly to the detriment of the child. Meier and Lemmer (2015) emphasise that the success of the child at school depends on the level of co-operation among these three spheres.

The importance of parental involvement in a learner's academic progress has received widespread endorsement among scholars. Morolong and Naong (2011:240) stress that "whether or not parental involvement can improve learner outcomes is no longer an issue." This statement suggests that it is beyond any reasonable doubt that parental involvement in a child's education is crucial for the maximum achievement of the child. Ofole (2017) also cemented this view by highlighting that many psychologists believe that parent to child relationships mirror who the child will become in the future and how the child will integrate into the broader society. This view reinforces the need for parental involvement in a child's academic life.

Considering that parental involvement is held in high esteem by many researchers in so far as it yields positive learning outcomes for learners, it will be expected that parents and teachers should also embrace the same parental involvement strategy as a requisite ingredient for the success of children at school. Some researchers, like Ndebele (2015), noted that parental involvement in schools is rarely fully utilised in most schools. Ndebele (2015) commented that the majority of parents in South Africa do not participate steadfastly and meaningfully in their children's education. Lemmer

(2013) noted that some parents remain at loss as to their exact role in the education of their children. Such confusion results in some tension and sometimes causes the two parties, namely the teachers and the parents, to develop some form of mutual annoyance with each other.

The Department of Basic Education (2012), on The National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 on 28 December 2012, allows for learners who, ordinarily, would have repeated a grade to be progressed to the next grade. Progressed learners in South Africa are the equivalent of learners who gain automatic promotion in the Ibadan metropolis in Nigeria. Ofole (2017) defines automatic promotion as the act of allowing a learner who has not adequately gained the necessary academic skills and knowledge to proceed to the next grade. According to Ofole (2017), repeating learners and learners who gain automatic promotion are vulnerable to social ills, such as alcohol and drug abuse. Ofole (2017) then suggests that research into these repeating and progressed learners should not be seen as a misplaced priority since a high percentage of repeating and progressed learners is often an indicator of future learner dropouts.

This research study, therefore, ventured to investigate the causes of non-involvement by parents in their children's education. The research focused primarily on parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. Grade 11 is the fourth grade at secondary schools. It is also the second year in the Further Education and Training phase (FET) and is the penultimate grade before learners write the final National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations which, ultimately, usher them to tertiary institutions.

Enemuo and Obidike (2013:807) view parents as being the first educators in anyone's life. Parents form an integral part of a child's academic life. Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart 1999, Harris and Gooddall 2007, as cited by Enemuo and Obidike (2013), noted that parental participation in a child's school related activities at home was closely linked to a child's better cognitive attainment. Enemuo and Obidike (2013) also argued that many parents are oblivious of the importance that they possess in the academic wellbeing of their children. Pretorius and Machet (2004) pointed out that in many previously disadvantaged communities



the reading culture is below average compared to other communities. Parents in such communities do not participate much to improve a reading culture that will ultimately yield the desired academic performance of their children.

Parents, whether intentionally or unintentionally, are a big factor as far as shaping their children's future is concerned. Such influence may be a product of affordability which may determine the type of school the children will go to, the community which the child will grow into, whether it be in a peaceful gated neighbourhood or into a community where drug abuse and other social ills are not only rife but also an expectation for social conformity. Notwithstanding their own perceived limitations, illiterate and poorly educated parents may also be ignorant regarding the opportunities available to them to make significant contributions in shaping their children's future as has been outlined by Enemu and Obidike (2013:808).

Parents may either be literate or illiterate. Some children are fortunate to have parents who are actually more knowledgeable than their school teachers. Such parents have the intellectual capacity to contribute more towards the mastery of academic content mastery by their children than the official school teachers. These factors are obviously beyond anyone's control. Despite this fact, the importance of parental influence on learner performance is still debatable and subject to intense scrutiny in educational research. Domina (2005:4) noted that some parental involvement activities had a deterrent effect on some behavioural challenges by learners. This view was also echoed by Singh and Mbokodi (2011:9) in their study on adolescence violence. They advocated for stronger involvement by parents. Smit and Liebenberg (2003) also observed that schools tend to regard learner discipline as a domain that belongs to the parent wing. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel Green, Wilkins and Closson (2005) noted that parents are often blamed for any manifestation of learner ill-discipline leading to poor performance. In such cases, children may end up being deprived of the support that they deserve from their parents and teachers as both will shift responsibility and engage in a blame game.

Grade 11 learners are mostly at the height of adolescent life. It is a critical phase in the socialization process in human life. Paulson (1994) and Steinberg and Silk (2002), as quoted by Spera (2005) highlight that, the adolescence phase is a fragile stage in human psychological development where the collaboration between the school and

the home becomes critically important. With this observation in mind, it became justifiable to engage the parents of children in this age group in a research study on parental involvement. Singh, Mbokodi, and Msila, (2004) reinforce this view by arguing that a learner's home background is of paramount importance as it has a significant influence on a learner's academic performance.

It may be a sound observation that all grades in the school system are critical as each grade forms a stepping stone and a foundation for the next grade. This observation was noted by Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber (2010), as cited by Verbeek (2014:1), who said, "Research about accumulated advantage in literacy development suggest that children who fall behind expectations in early years of schooling seldom catch up and failure is compounded over time." Despite the equal importance of all grades, it is necessary to highlight the unique importance of grade 11 and, therefore, the greater demand and expectation for parental guidance and involvement in that grade.

Grade 11 sets the tone or foundation for what may transpire in grade 12. For this reason, tertiary institutions, such as universities and colleges, value the grade 11 results as a worthy yardstick for provisional registration should learners wish to enrol at university upon completion of grade 12. When learners fail to secure provisional registration, then, irrespective of the outcome of the grade 12 results, the learners may be forced to take a gap year. Such a gap year is usually characterised by periods of no activity.

The National Senior Certificate (NCS) attained in grade 12 is also the only recognised national school certificate in South Africa. Learners who wish to rewrite NCS in the future will, therefore, need to have grade 11 results as a requirement for successful registration for NCS examinations.

In the light of the prominence placed on grade 11 examination results, it becomes even more compelling that grade 11 learners receive the maximum support from all stakeholders in the school system as failure to achieve satisfactory results in this grade may cause irreversible damage in their future academic endeavours.

This study was conducted at three secondary schools in Soweto. The study was done to investigate what causes lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. Six learners were interviewed in line with the adopted qualitative approach. The learners were identified using purposive sampling. The six learners

were drawn from three participating schools. The responsible parents of the selected learners were also interviewed about their perceptions on their roles with regards to their children's education. Three Geography teachers each from the three participating schools also participated in the research study.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND**

Stakeholders in education, among them parents, teachers, and national and provincial governments, are constantly seeking ways to upgrade the standard and number of learners who leave the school system with qualifications that will provide a firm foundation for the learners' future endeavours. The National Centre on Secondary Education and Transition [NCSET] 2006, as cited by Pricilah, Nyang'au and Chang'ach (2014) for example, observed that learners whose parents remain committed and involved actively in their children's education make easy transitions into adult life and have better graduation rates compared to those children whose parents adopt a neglectful approach. Provincial education departments set targets for respective districts in terms of pass percentages and the quality of passes per district. Districts themselves also set targets for individual schools in respect of the same targets they get from provincial government.

Teachers are expected to deliver the set targets and, in some instances, principals who fail to deliver may be required to give an account of why the target proved elusive. At school level, the School Governing Board (SGB), as per the South African Schools Act SASA of 1996, is the driving force that sets the tone for how the school will be run in order to fulfil the mandate to make the school functional. The composition of the SGB as determined by the SASA of 1996 includes learner representatives, a non-teaching staff representative, the principal of the school, representatives from the teachers' wing as well as parents' representatives. SGBs, among other functions as outlined in SASA (1996), have a role to 'promote the best interest of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.' The SGB is also mandated to draft and ratify a code of conduct for learners at the school. Lastly, the Act expects the SGB to offer support to the school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, in the performance of their professional functions.

When a school fails to achieve the projected outcomes in terms of pass percentages and other targets, such as the number of bachelor passes and science passes, which are put in place by the district office, only educators out of the four key stakeholders become accountable for the poor performance. They are the paid professionals in the system. Educators will be expected to give a convincing account to the principal who, in turn, may risk enduring the embarrassment of demotion should he or she fail to give a convincing vindication for poor performance. Schools should, therefore, maximise the involvement of parents to ensure that targets are met or surpassed. According to the SASA of 1996, a principal cannot appoint, or hire or fire educators unilaterally without the SGB endorsement. Principals are, therefore, limited or in some cases hindered in the execution of their duties by their local school SGB.

The SGB, in particular the parent wing and parents in general, may, therefore, pose a significant threat to the performance of learners but somehow they are not required to account for poor performance by learners should they fail to meet the expected target. The need to evaluate the role that lack of parental involvement may have adversely on the poor performance of Grade 11 Geography learners is, therefore, necessary.

Gauteng District has 15 districts. For the past four years, District 14 has consistently maintained its position among the poor performing districts at the tail end of the provincial rankings. Educators in District 14 have been blamed for the poor performance.

Parental involvement in schools has already been identified as a requisite condition that helps to bring out the academic excellence of learners. If, indeed, parental involvement has such a fundamental role in education, and, if it is indisputable that there is no uniformity in parental involvement across all social groupings and among individual families, then it should be a matter of concern on the academic front as to how parental involvement may be applied in order to have an equal benefit for all learners or, at least, how previously disadvantaged communities could take advantage of this ingredient for the benefit of the learners.

The South African government, as highlighted in the SASA (1996), has already taken measures to redress the financial handicap that was prevalent in previously disadvantaged communities. Such measures include declaring some schools as non-

fee paying schools as well as introducing modern technology in the same schools with the most recent milestone being the introduction of smart classes. Smart classes are classes that are designed to accommodate the use of modern technology and the integration of information technology (IT) in the teaching and learning process.

However, some children, as fate will have it, remain handicapped as far as having the desirable parental involvement in their education is concerned and, therefore, may remain in the doldrums with respect to human freedom and economic emancipation. This view was highlighted by Meier and Lemmer (2015) when they stressed that parental involvement has a cumulative effect on a child's overall human development. Parental involvement may remain a silent factor but is yet a significant factor in achieving economic breakthrough for some learners.

With university and other tertiary institutions not being able to accommodate every high school graduate, intake at such institutions has become the preserve of the few. Compounded by high unemployment rates, it will be highly unlikely that enlightened parents will not do whatever it takes to ensure that their own children come first to the university and job opportunity feeding trough. Children whose parents may be oblivious of the importance of their own involvement may inevitably relegate their own children to second citizen status. Ultimately children whose parents are actively involved and participate fully in their education tend to have the cutting edge over those who rely only on the school teacher for any academic breakthrough.

### **1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Parental influence on learner academic progress has undoubtedly received enormous attention in the field of education in the past two decades. Although there seems to be a general consensus that parental input in children's education is a welcome factor and has positive outcomes on learner achievement from scholars like Duan, Guan and Bu (2018), Bempechat, Ronfard and Li (2018), Okeke (2014) and Bester (2007) and Singh and Mbokodi (2011), other scholars, on the other hand, and, in particular, Domina (2005), Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen and Brand – Gruwel (2018) noted inconsistencies in the research findings on parental participation and learner academic progress. While the former group of scholars were unanimous in recommending parental participation as a requisite ingredient in achieving learner academic excellence, the latter group was rather conservative and provided research

findings that yielded no correlation between parental participation and academic excellence and at times even produced negative relationships. Such inconsistencies in research findings creates a knowledge gap that invites more attention and demands for more research into the topic.

In spite of the inconclusive nature of research findings, researchers have nonetheless ventured to probe into why parental involvement in learner achievement is unbalanced across the societal divide. Duan, Guan and Bu (2018) noted that the socio-economic status of parents undoubtedly impacted on the relationship between parental involvement and adolescent learner achievement. While parents themselves tend to be blamed for non-participation, the lack of parental interest in children's education in some schools has been traced back to the schools themselves. Scholars, like Smit and Liebenberg (2003), argued that, "mainstream schools themselves pose barriers for both children and parents in the schooling system."

In light of the varying perceptions among scholars on the significance of parental involvement on learner achievement, it becomes justifiable that further investigation into parental involvement, particularly in previously disadvantaged communities, be done so as to empower both parents and schools with information regarding this most sought after ingredient in order to achieve the best out of the school system.

Soweto township schools in particular those in the Johannesburg central district have consistently performed below provincial average expectations. Lack of parental involvement among these schools can be attributed to these below average expectations. It is therefore key to investigate the causes of lack of parental involvement among selected schools. It is only when the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed learners are identified that the selected schools will be able to put in place systems in place to promote more parental involvement. When parents become more involved, the selected schools will then witness an improvement in pass rate and the progressed learners will stand a chance in meeting the demands of the new grade.

Other schools in Soweto and indeed the greater South Africa will also become aware of the limiting factors that cause parents to be less involved in the education of their children. Schools themselves will then adopt strategies to make parents to be more

involved in their children's education. Ultimately when parents become more involved, more learners will then improve in their academic performance.

#### **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This present study was concerned with the problem of a lack of parental involvement in the performance of learners. More specifically, this study investigated the causes of a lack of parental involvement among the poor performing progressed grade 11 Geography learners.

Parents are expected to contribute invaluable financial resources or otherwise ensure that their children get the best possible form of education in the hope that, in the future, they will become independent and will be better placed to be among the elite that have unlimited access to the global feeding table. Scholars, among them Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen and Brand-Gruwel(2018), Domina (2005), Duan, Guan and Bu (2018), and Singh and Mbokodi (2011) in South Africa, have carried out research studies into the relevance of parental influence in the school system and, in particular, its effect on the academic performance of the concerned learners. Most findings by the scholars listed above on parental involvement reinforce the argument that parental involvement is a necessary constituent in children's education.

A lack of parental involvement may continue to relegate previously disadvantaged communities to the doldrums of economic emancipation. Research findings in the past two decades on the influence of parental involvement on learner achievement, though they have yielded conflicting results, have shown a general inclination towards the positive relationship between parental involvement and learner achievement. As will be seen in the review of related literature, parents from all socio-economic backgrounds have different capabilities to make tangible contributions to their children's education irrespective of their levels of education. For some varying reasons, some researchers, in particular Whaples (2017:8), have noted that parental participation is significantly lower among people of low socio-economic backgrounds. This is the same group that should be tapping into this priceless ingredient for academic achievement in order to bring down the big disparity between the affluent and the less privileged members and, most importantly, to break the vicious cycle of poverty that continues to haunt previously disadvantaged communities. This can be

achieved if learners start to receive maximum parental support to perform well at school.

This research set out to investigate the causes of the lack of parental participation on the academic under achievement of grade 11 Geography learners at three township schools in Soweto.

#### **1.4.1 Main Research Questions**

The following main research question underpinned the study:

What are the causes of the lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners in three township schools in Soweto?

#### **1.4.2 Sub-Research Questions**

The following are the sub-questions:

1. What is the role of parents in the academic performance of progressed grade 11 Geography learners?
2. What form of parental involvement do teachers expect from the parents of the progressed learners?
3. What are the possible causes for the non-involvement by the parents of progressed grade 11 Geography learners?

#### **1.4.3 Aims and objectives**

This research was guided by following aims and objectives:

##### **1.4.3.1 The aim of the study**

This study investigates what the causes are for the lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners in three township schools in Soweto.

##### **1.4.3.2 The objectives of the Study**

The objectives are:

1. To investigate the role of parents in the academic performance of progressed grade 11 Geography learners.
2. To probe what teachers expect from parents in the academic performance of the progressed grade 11 Geography learners.



3. To investigate what causes a lack of parental involvement among parents of the progressed grade 11 Geography learners.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology that was used during this study was be guided by the worldview in which this study is located. This worldview falls under the interpretivist paradigm and will be qualitative in nature. A phenomenology research design was used as the methodology in an effort to answer the main research question on what causes lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners.

### **1.5.1 Interpretivist paradigm**

The research adopted the interpretivist paradigm as the overall conceptual framework. 'Conceptual framework' and 'theoretical framework' are terms that are often confused and sometimes used interchangeably yet are significantly different. Kavunja (2018:46) observed that, "Theoretical framework and conceptual framework are often confused even among experienced researchers." It is, therefore, necessary to make a distinction between the two to avoid any such confusion.

Kavunja (2018:47) then goes on to define conceptual framework as a total, logical orientation and associations of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans and practices and implementation of your entire research project. It is a conceptual framework that establishes the worldview in which your research will be located, whether it will be a positivist, an interpretivist paradigm, a post positivist or a pragmatic paradigm. In summary, a conceptual framework is the logical blueprint of the entire research. It influences the way the research topic is phrased, how it will be investigated, the methods of data collection. It offers the operational aspect of how the research will unfold. Kivunja (2018) also added that a conceptual framework is important as it helps to determine whether a research study will be qualitative or quantitative in approach. Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage, and Young, (2020) added that a conceptual framework offers a justification for why a given study is a worthy undertaking.

The interpretivist paradigm formed the worldview in which this research was located. As argued by Thanh and Thanh (2015:24), the interpretivist paradigm is rooted in seeking people's experiences, understanding and perceptions about a phenomenon

under investigation. This framework was more appropriate and relevant to this particular research as it enabled an engagement of all concerned stakeholders with regard to their perceptions about the importance of parental involvement and why it is lacking among progressed grade 11 Geography learners.

### **1.5.2 The research approach: Qualitative approach**

This research study dealing with the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners used an exclusively qualitative approach. This is because it sought to capture the participants' views on the causes of the lack of parental involvement among progressed learners. This is also expressed by Bryman (2017:57) who describes a qualitative research study as one that "is typically associated with participant observation, semi and unstructured interviewing, focus groups, the qualitative examination of texts, and various language-based techniques like conversation and discourse analysis." There is consensus among many researchers, such as Gleshe and Peshkin (1992), Silverman (2000) and McQueen (2002), as cited by Thanh and Thanh (2015), that interpretivists philosophers especially tend to incline towards the qualitative approach as they acquire knowledge.

### **1.5.3 Research design**

In view of the adopted interpretivists' conceptual framework and the qualitative approach, phenomenology became the research design. Eddles-Hirsch (2015) contended that phenomenology forms the backbone of a qualitative research study. Eddles-Hirsch (2015:251) explains that phenomenologists are, "more concerned with first hand descriptions of a phenomenon than they are in resolving why participants experience life the way they do." This research study dwelt on the views of parents, teachers and learners on what causes a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners. Yüksel and Yıldırım (2015:1) also point out that "the main purpose of phenomenological research is to seek reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings and to produce in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon."

This study sought to get participants' lived experiences related to the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners.

#### **1.5.4 Theoretical framework**

Kuvunja (2018) describes a theoretical framework as one that is comprised of theories expressed by experts in the particular subject area or field in which a researcher would plan to do a study. The researcher draws upon these theories to provide a theoretical overview for the way data will be collected and then analysed or interpreted. Swanson and Chermack (2013:122) added that a theoretical framework, “is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study”.

A theoretical framework summarises theories which were developed by experts in the field of the study or the topic that you intend to investigate. These theories help to guide your own research and offer a basis for data collection and its interpretation. In the study on the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners, the theoretical framework was derived from experts in theories of parental involvement in the education of learners.

Kivunja (2018) then concluded that a theoretical framework is a little subset of a conceptual framework. A conceptual framework is the umbrella term in which one’s research will be located. Experts in a given field will then offer theoretical frameworks under a given paradigm.

Scholars in the field of parental involvement generally acknowledge the typology on parental involvement by Epstein et al (1997) as a framework that can be used to guide research in the field of parental involvement. According to Morolong and Naong (2011:236), the typology is universally recognised and considered to be the international benchmark for parental involvement. This typology will offer a framework for what type of data will be collected and how it will be analysed.

### **1.6 RESEARCH METHODS**

The study adopted a phenomenological design and therefore made use of interviews based on semi-structured questions. These interviews were conducted with a purposively-sampled population size of 15 participants. These interviews were conducted via recorded video meetings.

#### **1.6.1 Sampling procedures and selection of participants**

Purposeful sampling procedure was implemented in the selection of participants. The sample was drawn from three participating schools. Two progressed learners per

participating school and their parents were purposively sampled to participate in the study. A geography teacher teaching the same progressed learners from each school also participated in the study. There is widespread agreement among interpretivists researchers, namely, Eddles-Hirsch (2015), Boyd (2001) and Creswell (1998), that two to ten participants are sufficient to draw conclusions in a phenomenological research design.

### **1.6.2 Data collection methods**

Data was collected by means of unstructured interviews. Six progressed Grade 11 Geography learners, two from each of the selected schools, and the parents of those selected learners participated during the investigation. In addition, one educator from each selected school teaching the same learners was interviewed. These interviews were conducted by video interview.

### **1.6.3 Data analysis**

The researcher analysed the data obtained from the individual interviews. This data was obtained from the parents, educators and learners. The researcher identified common themes and sub-themes to answer the research questions. The data collected was transcribed and then read, reviewed, synthesised, and interpreted to gain deeper insight on the phenomenon under study.

Data analysis followed the explication process of the data as recommended by Groenewald (2004), who claims that it requires to be done in these five stages:

- Bracketing and phenomenological reduction;
- Delineating units and meaning;
- Clustering of units of meaning to form themes;
- Summarising each interview and validating it; and
- Extracting general and unique themes and making a composite summary.

## **1.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY OF STUDY**

The reliability and trustworthiness of this research may have been compromised by a couple of factors making it necessary to exercise caution in any attempt to generalise the findings of this research at any level beyond its limitations. Respondents, in

particular learners, may have provided feedback that they may have felt will put them in good standing with the researcher.

Despite these limitations, the researcher implemented a couple of measures to safeguard that the validity and trustworthiness of the dissertation was not compromised. Bracketing the researcher from the research findings is one method that was applied to improve trustworthiness.

## **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Obtaining an ethical clearance was the basic starting point that was fulfilled before the research commenced. This clearance was granted by the UNISA Ethics Committee. Once the clearance had been granted, permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to embark on the research within schools under its auspices was then sought. Thereafter, the School Governing Boards of the respective schools were asked for permission to allow that the study be conducted within the school precincts in which they have direct jurisdiction.

## **1.9 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

### **1.9.1 Parental involvement**

The concept parental involvement is used interchangeably with the term parental participation as well as parental influence. There is no deviation or alternative definition for the term parent as defined by the SASA of 1996. SASA (1996) recognises the biological or adoptive parent, a person legally entitled to custody of a learner, and any person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of the biological or adoptive parent as a parent to a learner, and it is from such persons that parental participation is expected.

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004:529) are of the opinion that there is no consensus on the meaning of parental participation or involvement. This opinion is also shared by Clase et al (2007:246), as cited by Morolong and Naong (2011), who affirmed that “the term Participation has different meanings for different people.” On the other hand, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:238) define parental involvement as the devoting of resources, either financial or material, by parents as defined by SASA to the children’s education.

In this research study, parental involvement means the actual, intentional and conscious actions done by the parents that are directed towards influencing learner behaviour with the aim of aiding the school educators in the teaching/learning process. Parental involvement is also used to mean only positive influences. Such positive influences and actions that are in line with acceptable basic human rights as enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 and may include assisting with homework, monitoring studies, motivating the learners, and instilling discipline on the learner among other issues. Negative parental involvement, such as encouraging absenteeism by sending children on unnecessary errands during school time, is treated as no participation as such actions are undesirable in the school system.

### **1.9.2 Poor academic performance**

The term poor academic performance is used with its relative and subjective connotations. Poor performance is evaluated and judged solely from termly results as weighted by the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS) computer programme. SA-SAMS is a computer programme that performs the administrative tasks in schools including capturing and computation of marks as well as processing the learner termly and yearly reports. Therefore, the term 'poor performance' is used as determined and agreed upon by both the educator and the parents in relation to results captured on the SA-SAMS. Such a determination is also informed by the marks that the learner obtains during formal tests and examinations as well as from informal tasks in their classwork books.

The schools in which the research was undertaken are normal schools and are not classified under special schools. Only special schools in District 14 are designated to have learners with recognised learning barriers and diagnosed mental retardation. Such schools are also equipped with both the human resources and necessary infrastructure that is required to assist the learners to achieve their best potential. According to Ofole (2017:134), any failure by a learner to achieve minimum pass requirements at a normal school will be deemed to be poor performance as the learner is considered to be mentally capable of meeting and achieving the minimum pass requirements. Ofole (2017:134) goes on to say those who are not promoted are given, what is termed, "the gift of time", in order for them to catch up with others.

### **1.9.3 Progressed learners**

Progressed learners are learners who are allowed to proceed to the next grade despite having failed to meet the minimum promotional requirements. The National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 Government Notices No 722 and No. 723, Government Gazette No. 34600 of 12 September 2011 gives guidelines for learner promotion. The Gazette states that a learner should pass at least three subjects at 40% and above and among these subjects should be the learner's Home Language. In addition, the learner should also pass three other subjects at 30% or above. Should a learner fail to fulfil these minimum requirements, then the learner should satisfy progression requirements in order to go to the next grade.

The department of Basic Education (DBE) outlines the five criteria for progression on its website. First is that the learners should have all the School Based Assessment (SBA) requirements. SBA refers to all formal tasks administered by the school in an academic year. The SBA is added to the final Examination mark to produce a learner's promotional mark to the next grade. The second consideration is that the learner should have attended school regularly and should not have been absent from school for more than twenty days in a school calendar year. Thirdly, the learner should have failed a maximum of three subjects but should have passed the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) at the school. Lastly, the learner should have already repeated once in the Phase. At secondary school level there are two phases, namely The General Education and Training (GET) phase and the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. GET is also called the senior phase which starts from grade 6 to grade 9. FET starts from grade 10 to grade 12. Once a learner has already repeated grade 10 or grade 11 once, then the learner will be considered for progression should he or she satisfy other requirements.

### **1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted during the Covid 19 pandemic. During the pandemic direct consultation with learners was discouraged. The interviews were conducted via social media platforms, such as Zoom and WhatsApp video meetings. Such meetings deprived the researcher of the opportunity to observe key facial expressions that are necessary when drawing conclusions about individual perceptions.

Only three schools were involved in the study. This sample of schools may be viewed as being too small to generalise findings to a wider geographic area. Therefore, the results of the study are relevant only to those participating schools.

Academic performances in schools is usually measured in comparison with average expected performance not against an individual's own maximum potential. This may create an impression that parents whose children are struggling in school are not doing enough in terms of contribution in the learning experience of the child.

Although the study was conducted at three different schools, conflict of interest cannot be completely ruled out since the researcher may be known by some of the participants. Educators in the same district may have opted to give responses that are favourable to the researcher.

While taking note of, and acknowledging, these inherent limitations, caution was taken to uphold the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. The researcher systematically bracketed himself from the research to ensure that only the views of the respondents were captured and reflected.

### **1.11 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted at three schools in Gauteng province and in Johannesburg Central District, also coded as District 14 (D14). The sample size may be viewed as being too small to allow for the generalization of results.

### **1.12 CHAPTER DIVISION**

#### **Chapter 1**

Chapter 1 provides the general orientation of how the study was be conducted. The chapter captures all aspects of the study in all the five chapters. Chapter 1 offers an outline of the general background of the study, the rationale of the study, statement of the problem, the research questions, aims and objectives of the study. Chapter 1 also offers an insight into the methodology that was used during the data collection stage as well as a definition of terms as they were applied in the study.

#### **Chapter 2**

This chapter dwells on the review of the related literature regarding parental involvement and its effects on the academic performance of learners at school. The



perceptions of parental involvement as viewed by different researchers were also considered. This chapter also reviews the different methodologies that have been used by other researchers when similar studies were done. Findings from similar studies were also evaluated.

### Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was used during the investigation. The researcher adopted an interpretivist paradigm as the overall conceptual framework which provided a worldview in which this research is located. A qualitative approach and a phenomenology research design was used. The Comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnership on parental involvement by Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders and Simon (1997) was used as the theoretical framework that guided this study. Issues regarding population size sampling methods and sample size, the instruments of data collection, analysis of findings and explicitation of phenomena, reliability and trustworthiness of the findings are discussed in this chapter.

### Chapter 4

Chapter 4 deals with the analysis of the research findings. This involved the process of the explicitation and interpretation of the different perspectives of parental involvement in learner achievement. The chapter also analyses interviews that were recorded from different participants.

### Chapter 5

This chapter draws conclusions on the whole research study and provides recommendations for future research on the similar topics. It is the summary of the whole research endeavour.

## **1.13 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY**

The chapter has aimed at introducing the structure of the research was undertaken during the investigation on what are the causes of the lack of parental involvement among progressed Grade 11 Geography learners in three Soweto schools.

Parental involvement remains a key ingredient that has the potential to unlock learners' maximum potential in a school's academic success. Grade 11 occupies a critical space in the learners' future academic prospects and, therefore, demands

maximum input from all stakeholders and, in particular, from parents. The study also acknowledges the inherent limitations of the study, chief among them being the small population size that limits the findings to only the schools that participated in the research study.

The research study adopted a qualitative approach in its drive to understand the causes of lack of parental involvement on academic underachievement of the same learners.

The next chapter focuses on a review of the literature that relates to the causes and effects of the lack of parental involvement among poor performing learners. The review of the literature focuses on research work that has already been done on questions, such as how are parents involved in the academic performance of learners? What the expectations of teachers from parents in the teaching and learning process are? What the possible causes for the non-involvement by parents in the academic performance of their children at school are?

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter offered a general orientation of the study. It presented the rationale for the study, a statement of the problem with the research question focussing on the causes of the lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. The aim of the study was to investigate the causes of the lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners. Chapter 1 also highlighted the methodology that was to be employed during the data collection stage in chapter 3. The overall conceptual framework was outlined as being the interpretivist paradigm which will provide the worldview in which this research is located. The study was exclusively qualitative in nature and phenomenology was discussed as being the research design that was used. The Comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnership Epstein et al (1997) was indicated as being the theoretical framework that guided this study.

Grade 11, according to the South African education system, is the penultimate year before learners exit the formal school system. It is a critical year as it forms the basic foundation for learner achievement in grade 12. Universities across South Africa use the grade 11 end of year results as a yardstick to register prospective undergraduate candidates provisionally for the following year. Grade 11, therefore, demands that all key stakeholders pull together their efforts in order for the learners to achieve the best possible results. Parents and their involvement with their children's education are a key constituent in achieving academic progress among children.

This chapter reviews the literature that analyses the research problem on the causes of lack of parental involvement on the academic poor performance among progressed grade 11 Geography learners.

Parental involvement has received considerable approval as being a requisite condition for learner achievement. This is highlighted in the review of the related literature. Adolescence, as highlighted by Spera (2005), is a specific human developmental stage in which the relationship between the school and home become especially important. It will be expected that during this phase of human development, Grade 11 learners should receive the maximum support especially from their parents. Mmotlane, Winnaar and Wakivilu (2009:528) have, however, detected below average

parental input in the way parents become associated with school activities particularly in South African public schools when learners become adolescents. It is in the face of such findings that Spera (2005:129) advocated for further research to unearth why parental participation among teenage adolescence takes a downturn at that critical stage and to find out what the repercussions of such a slump in parental involvement are.

This chapter endeavours to understand the connection between parental involvement and learner achievement from a global perspective and within the South African context in particular. Different viewpoints are reviewed taking note of the inherent shortcomings of the documented research findings. Different levels of parental involvement, range from School Governing Body (SGB) participation and parents' meetings to involvement based on day-to-day parental support and assistance. Different parenting styles are also given attention in so far as they affect learner-parent relationships. Such relationships have implications for the nature of parental support in education.

Epstein et al (1997) proposed six types of parental participation. This typology that falls under the comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnership form the theoretical framework on which this research is based.

## **2.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS**

The South African Schools Act of 1996 defines a parent in broad terms. A parent is seen as someone who is directly responsible for the welfare of a child regardless of any biological connection. From the SASA of 1996, it is apparent that even members of society who have been granted lawful custody of a child become the parent of the child. Social welfare institutions, as well as orphanages, assume full rights to become parents of children under their care. Parental involvement should not, therefore, be limited to the activities of the biological parents but include those who act *in loco parentis*.

Lemmer (2009:87) noted that, "a parent can be single, married, relative, legal guardian, an older sibling, a surrogate foster parent or a group such as a commune." With these varying parental and family structures, Lemmer (2009) then recommended

that schools should acknowledge the different household formations and living arrangements as they engage with parents in the learning process.

Parents, as viewed by Lemmer (2009:87), are an integral part of a learner's family, whether they are the biological parents, older siblings, relatives or surrogate foster parents. Van Schalkwyk (1986:178), as cited by Lemmer (2009), added that a family from a Christian perspective is seen as a community of love. Love should mean parents showing concern and being deliberate in their involvement regarding their children's education. Van Schalkwyk (1986), as cited by Lemmer (2009), also pointed out that a family is not limited only to ensuring physical protection and care for household members but also that younger members of this small society deserve to be corrected, moulded, groomed and to be given the necessary support they require in order to become productive in their adult life. This support and guidance should continue throughout the young children's life until they become independent and graduate into adult life.

Although the term parental involvement may appear to be devoid of any ambiguity, it is, interestingly, a term that has been defined differently among scholars. Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004:529) are of the opinion that there is no consensus with regard to the meaning of parental participation or involvement. This opinion was also shared by Clase et al (2007:246), as cited by Morolong and Naong (2011:236), who affirmed that, "the term Participation has different meanings for different people." On the other hand, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:238) defined parental involvement as the devotion of resources, either financial or material, by parents as defined by SASA of 1996 for the children within their given jurisdiction.

The definition by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:238) as cited above is broad in its approach. It almost encompasses the general upkeep of children as an act of parental involvement. This may imply that the paying of school fees, buying of learner stationery and uniforms and fulfilling general parent obligations may be interpreted as parental involvement in school education. LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011:116) offered an alternative definition by pointing out that parental involvement "can be generally defined as the parents and caregivers' investment in the education of their children". The use of the term investment would appear vague. It is not clear whether it implies financial, social, intellectual or time investment. It fails to offer parameters of

such investment and leaves it for speculation by the reader. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), as cited by Boonk, Gijselaer, Ritzen and Brand-Gruwel (2018), seem to offer a more concise definition. They view parental involvement as actions done by the parent both outside the school and within the school precinct. Their definition limits involvement to actual activities and actions that are observable and can be evaluated.

The definition of parental involvement as offered by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) is also captured by Morolong and Naong (2011:236) who describe parental involvement as also encompassing matters that enable the securing of a safe and stable learning environment at home. According to Morolong and Naong (2011) such involvement may also include parent-child discussions regarding school work and the ability of parents or members of the family who act *in loco parentis* to be good role models. Such a definition embraces illiterate parents as people who are equally capable of getting involved in their children's schooling life. Morolong and Naong (2011:236) also identified activities at home that may constitute parental involvement. Such activities include general discussions about school life, assisting in homework and even keeping an eye to ensure that the child's personal studying timetable is adhered to.

Parental involvement is also not limited to the home environment. At the school, Morolong and Naong (2011) point out, parental involvement may include attending school organised workshops and other school organised functions. This conception of the term parental involvement was also embraced by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Gonzalez-Mena (2011), as cited by Enemu and Obidike (2013), when they highlighted that it is an aggregate of commitment and meaningful involvement by the parent in the schooling life of the child at both the school and at home.

Scholars have tended to use the term parental involvement and parental participation interchangeably. Mmotlane, Winnaar and Wakivilu (2009:529) concur with other researchers by affirming that parental involvement and participation are synonymous.

Although a huge amount of responsibility is placed on the teachers, a high volume of literature suggest that parents remain an invaluable component in the learning process of all children. Gonzalez (2002:132), as cited by Singh and Mbokodi (2011), reveal that lack of parental involvement promotes peer reliance. Paulson 1994 and Steinberg and Silk (2002), as cited by Spera (2005:126), point out that "adolescence

is a critical period of human development when the interface of the school and the family gain critical importance". The absence of parental involvement, as Gonzalez (2002) as cited by Singh and Mbokodi (2011) points out, will trigger drug abuse, truancy and other deviant behaviour associated with peer pressure.

It should, however, be acknowledged that emotional stability and a positive self-image do not always translate into improved learner academic achievement. Nonetheless, parental involvement, as observed by Morolong and Naong (2011), is associated with lower learner dropouts and truancy rates. Morolong and Naong further assert that research has consistently revealed a positive relationship between parents' keen interest in children's education and academic improvement among the learners whose parents were involved.

Okeke (2014) observed some substantial evidence from scholars, like Epstein (1995), Keane, (2007) Lemmer and Van Wyk, (2004), and Lemmer (2009) pointing to the view that improved parental involvement results in improved learner achievement. Morolong and Naong (2011:240) also point out that research over the years has shown a consistent positive relationship between involvement by parents and learners' improved learning outcomes. They also added that parental involvement was also linked to lower learner school drop-out and truancy cases. Senechal and Lefevre (2002) do not doubt the relevance of parental input in children's education and state that the significance of parental involvement was no longer a matter subject to debate.

Among issues that may concern researchers into parental involvement should be issues on why parents are not involved and how they ought to be involved. Recently, Duan, Guan and Bu (2018:1) also found that activities aimed at making some contribution by parents towards their children's education were highly valuable particularly for lower grade school learners in families with a low socio-economic status. Soweto is a township that is home to many communities that were disadvantaged during the apartheid era. If, indeed, the findings of Duan, Guan and Bu (2018) are anything to go by, then further investigations into why parental participation is not fully embraced in some township schools should gain momentum. The findings by Duan, Guan and Bu (2018) were also shared by Enemu and Obidike (2013) who stress that inasmuch as parental involvement has its greatest effects in

the early years, its significance on children's education continues into adolescence and even up to adulthood. Notwithstanding the importance parental involvement in every learning area, Wright, Bouchard, Bosdotter and Grandberg, as cited by Ememuo and Obidike (2013), reveal a bias towards literacy and state that literacy should be regarded as everyone's responsibility and not that of the schools alone. Parents, whether they are biological parents, older siblings, relatives or foster parents have a responsibility to ensure maximum comprehension by learners.

The Department for children, schools and families (2009), as cited by Enemuo and Obidike (2013:808), advised that "many parents are not aware of the importance they play in their children's education and have a limited understanding of their role in their children's education." If parents are unaware of the immense contribution that they can make in the academic performance of their children, then both the schools and the learners would have been deprived of this valuable input. Ultimately the children will not reach their full potential in their academic performance. Duan, Guan and Bu (2018) also observe that socio-economic status undoubtedly affects the interface between parental involvement and adolescent learner achievement. Domina (2005:233) concurs with these findings and speculates that the "involvement of parents of low socio economic status may be more effective than that of parents with high socio- economic status". This assertion implies that the cumulative impact of parental involvement will be significantly higher among low income communities than the higher income communities. Such an observation is well embraced by Coleman, Schiller and Schneider (2018) who conclude that community characteristics, such as informal neighbourhood networks among parents, assisted as an added vital resource for parental involvement.

Although it might be difficult to link children's misbehaviour to academic poor performance directly, Vogel (2008:16) comments that "the frequency of behavioural problems among the youth of today often predicts the size of our future prison population." Vogel (2008) goes on to point out that learners who experience emotional insecurity often have learning barriers. A family as a unity, and parental guidance and involvement in particular, helps to ensure that such insecurities are kept at tractable levels and, therefore, limits the manifestation of learning barriers.



In the past two decades there has been significant debate on the significance of parental participation on learner academic performance. Domina (2005:234), however, noted that, “the evidence regarding the effectiveness of parental involvement has been mixed and largely discouraging.” Domina goes on to observe that the relationship between parental participation and school performance remains inconclusive. In a study done by Nyarko (2011), parental involvement, where mothers were engaged positively and significantly, correlated with positive academic performance by the learners. This was in sharp contrast to the results in which fathers were involved and the outcome proved insignificant.

Fine (1993) and Reay (1998), as cited by Domina (2005), attribute the positive relationship between parental influence and learner performance to the class and racial privileges that the concerned parents possess and contribute to the school system. Such advantages will include financial contributions in the form of school fees and other levies payable to schools. These financial injections enable the acquisition of state of the art infrastructure and technology as well as making classes smaller and manageable. Singh, Mbokodi and Msila ((2004) concur with Domina (2005) by stating that “the learner’s background is considered to be a crucial factor that influences the learner’s performance.” Affluent parents have resources to outsource their parenting roles and pay those hired to perform such parenting roles. Lemmer (2009) recorded one such parent who remarked that, “I don’t have time but I am willing to pay”. Such privileges may not be available within previously disadvantaged communities and learners there have only the parent to rely on.

While affluent parents tend to have the privilege of choosing the best schools on the basis of a positive reputation, Vigar-Ellis (2013) and Motala and Luxomo (2014) noted that, in poor townships, parents did not enjoy the same freedom. They observed that parents chose schools on the basis of proximity only. Academic achievement within affluent communities can, therefore, be traced back to the financial and historical capital that parents bring to the table as opposed to their direct physical and emotional involvement. Pretorius and Machet (2004) noted that many previously disadvantaged people come from a background where a reading culture was non-existent. This historical background makes it difficult for schools to utilise parental involvement.

The significance of a family's economic status on parental involvement in education should not be underestimated. Omoteso (2010:226) noted that it is not uncommon to see school children engaging in hawking activities and street trading after school and sometimes even during school time as they endeavour to generate income for the family. Omoteso (2010) also commented that such actions will ultimately contribute to poor performance, absenteeism and the failure to do homework. Poor parents then find themselves in a position between a rock and a hard place. They either have to face starvation or send their children to school. In this case poverty will become a deciding factor on how the parents participate and make a meaningful contribution to their children's education.

Dysfunctional families pose another challenge to parental involvement. Lemmer (2009:89) highlights that dysfunctional families can be caused by a number of factors, chief among them being death, divorce or abandonment by parents. In the eventuality of such an existence of a dysfunctional family, Lemmer (2009) observed that Christian teachers are sometimes called upon to assist learners in such situations. They become both teacher and parent providing such learners with love, care and support.

Parental involvement is, therefore, a vital ingredient in a child's pursuit of academic excellence. Parents, irrespective of the age of children and the nature of subjects that their children pursue, should be encouraged to be involved in their children's education. Participation in children's education does not require one to be an academic as it takes various forms.

### **2.2.1 The role of parents in the teaching and learning process and the school**

Since the formalisation of the school system, parents are now taking their children to institutionalised schools to get formal qualifications. Although parents retain the full liability for the upbringing of their children, the future of mankind is increasingly being placed on the doorstep of formal schools under the stewardship of educators. Rambiyana and Kok (2002:10) argue that people have the latitude either to assume the direct upbringing of their children themselves or commission this responsibility to others. Schools have become institutions that are mandated to fulfil this constitutional obligation. Parents view schools as institutions where the intellectual growth of their children takes place. Motala and Luxomo (2014) aptly capture this expectation from parents when they record that some parents according to their research referred to

the schools as their schools. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) also hinted that, in some schools, teachers complained that they were expected to teach, play the role of parents, priests, providers and counsellors. Such enormous responsibilities may lead to fatigue and physical and emotional burn out among the educators.

Despite the fact that parental participation is being seen as an indispensable ingredient for learner academic achievement, this view has not escaped its own fair share of interrogation among scholars.

The evidence linking increased parental involvement to improved learner academic achievement has already been dismissed as being inconclusive by some researchers. Domina (2005:231) perceives that “evidence on the effectiveness of parental involvement is uneven”. While acknowledging that many research results yielded positive relationships between involvement and learner achievement, Domina (2005) also noted that many studies actually yielded a negative relationship between parental involvement and learner school academic progress. For example, Fan (2001) and Milne et al (1986), as cited by Domina (2005), all observed a weak relationship between parental participation and learner performance. In light of the varying and seemingly contradictory findings, Domina (2005) then questioned whether parental participation warranted the confidence and trust that people have entrusted to it. Rambiyana and Kok (2002) were sceptical about whether parents were able to make significant contributions to the schooling system. Such arguments seriously tainted the prevailing notion that parental involvement is a primary ingredient for learner achievement.

Qualitative research on the relevance of parental participation on their children’s academic performance in sporting activities has shown that parental involvement is largely unwelcome by coaches in various sporting codes, as stated by Surujlal, Dhurup and Sooful (2008). While acknowledging that sport and academic subjects are not related, it should be noted that, when parents become involved, it is precisely because the ultimate goal is to bring out excellence in the learners. Surujlal, Dhurup and Sooful (2008:1) record that “some coaches saw parents as an inconvenience, unnecessary and ‘constantly in the way’”. It will, therefore, be interesting to find out whether schools and their teachers do not exhibit the same negative attitudes as portrayed by the coaches with regard to parental involvement. Coaches who were

interviewed felt that parents should not be tolerated anywhere close to the sporting arena.

Although schools do not, and may not, explicitly show the same intolerance towards parents, Smit and Liebenberg (2003) notice that mainstream schools on their own sometimes pose impediments to parental involvement on learner academic progress. It is, nonetheless, not clear whether these barriers are systematically put in place or are coincidental owing to ignorance on the part of the schools themselves. Motala and Luxomo (2014:82) add that “schools do not always provide equal opportunities for parents to be involved”. What stands out from these arguments is that parental involvement is not always welcome by schools. Lemmer (2012) also outlined some views that were consistent with those of Motala and Luxomo (2014) by adding that, in most schools, parental involvement takes the form of highly ritualised meetings. In such meetings, parents are expected to behave in specific ways and to adhere to prescribed rules that are pre-determined by the schools. Lemmer (2012) also suggested that such meetings are mostly done on a perfunctory basis possibly to cover up and exonerate teachers from any wrong doing in the event that learners’ performance may end up being below target expectations.

Notwithstanding the scepticism surrounding the degree of the contribution of parental participation on learner performance, current South African legislation on education compels parents to be increasingly engaged in their children’s academic life. Segalo and Rambuda (2018:3) reveal that “teachers are unsure about disciplining learners especially in the light of the human rights principles outlined in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996a, the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 and the South African Council of Educators Act, Act No. 31 of 2000.” They, therefore, go on to recommend that these acts deserve serious scrutiny as teachers are now forced to adopt a cautious approach when disciplining learners or risk being accused of gross abuse. These Acts have in essence handicapped schools and their teachers. One educator who was interviewed by Segalo and Rambuda (2018) indicated that “teachers cannot even retaliate when provoked.” A growing sense of hopelessness and defencelessness was also observed among teachers during the research study. In the light of the current state of affairs it will then be expected that parents would have to step up to fill in the disciplinary vacuum created by the current Acts governing learner discipline in schools.

Although these government Acts have a direct bearing on learner discipline, their influence on learners' academic achievement is not well documented. It is an area that may still need to be explored. It may, however, be hypothesised that when the level of discipline is high then a fertile ground for academic achievement would have been created. Ofole (2017:134) hinted that progressed learners and repeating learners are susceptible to different social ills, such as violent activities, alcohol and drug abuse. Such learners require significant parental involvement.

The schools themselves must, therefore, create clear policies on how they wish the parents to get involved. In the absence of clear policies parents are left guessing as to what is expected of them.

### **2.2.2 The role of parents in the teaching and learning process, and the teacher**

Schools have State paid employees. Public schools in South Africa have a principal who runs the school. The school principal has a team that works with him or her to manage the school. Such a team is called the School Management Team (SMT). This SMT is made up of the school principal, the deputy principal or deputy principals, as well as all Learning Area or subject Heads of Departments (HODs). In addition to this team a school will have subject teachers who deliver curricula content to learners in different grades. The SMT and all educators who are responsible for curriculum delivery at schools are collectively called teachers.

Teachers generally are known to have a strong inclination towards parental involvement. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) reported that, in some schools, teachers complained that were being overburdened by doing duties that were supposed to be under the parent domain. Such additional tasks performed as a result of the non-involvement by parents were causing fatigue on the part of teachers and emotional burn out. Considering that corporal punishment was outlawed, Smit and Liebenberg (2003:1) observed that schools now regard learner discipline as a responsibility of the parents. Any manifestations of ill-discipline are promptly referred to parents to deal with. Despite their sincere desire to involve parents, teachers themselves sometimes serve as stumbling blocks in involving parents in the teaching/learning process.

Teachers' attitudes and practices have been identified as issues that discourage parents from showing any enthusiasm with regard to their children's education. Mestry

and Globber (2007:183), as cited by Morolong and Naong (2011:251), state that “a genuine partnership with parents requires a substantial change in teachers’ attitudes and practices.” Morolong and Naong (2011:250) also singled out some school principals’ attitudes and nature of co-operation as issues that play a determining role for parental involvement.

In a research study done by Morolong and Naong (2011) parents were recorded as having complained that the principal as the head of teacher wing often had a tendency to side-line parents whose views seemed divergent from those of the principal. Some parents recommended that a school should have a year plan and activities of the school should be communicated well in advance for parents to participate fully in such meetings. Impromptu meetings that sometimes have a ritualised structure discouraged parents from being active participants in their children’s education.

Some teachers find it difficult to embrace the contributions that parents make and dismiss them as a mere waste of time. One educator, in a study done by Singh and Mbokodi (2011:43), remarked that parents could not assist learners with homework as they themselves could not understand what needed to be done. In a similar study done by Turman (2007:152), parents are also accused by teachers of putting too much pressure that constituted improbable and unattainable expectations for the learners. Such teachers tended to shun parental involvement and would prefer to do it alone.

In order to get the best out of parents, Lemmer (2013:36) recommends that teachers should be responsive to parents. They need to adopt a non-judgemental approach and to be sensitive to different cultural and socio economic backgrounds.

Parents sometimes fail fully to understand the role that they ought to play in their children’s education. Enemuo and Obidike (2013:808) observe that “Many parents are not aware of the importance they have in their children’s education and have limited understanding of their role in their children’s learning.” There are very many ways in which parents can become involved in their children’s education. These different roles are encompassed in the theoretical framework adopted from Epstein et al (1997) which include:

- Parenting;
- Communicating;

- Volunteering;
- Learning at home/ homework;
- Decision making; and
- Collaboration with the community.

The main role that every parent is mandated to perform is to establish a home environment that is conducive to learning for the child. This, according to the theoretical framework, constitutes the parenting role. Morolong and Naong (2011) state that parents have an obligation to create and provide a safe and stable learning environment where the children are free to discuss school-related issues with their parents. Lemmer (2009) also highlights that parents, among other things, provide physical care to their children, love, behavioural guidance and correction as well as a safe place from which a child can explore the whole world.

These issues that form part of a parent's constitutional obligations may appear to be unrelated to parental involvement in their children's education, but households where these are non-existent become stumbling blocks in a child's academic progress. Lemmer (2009:88) recorded some educators saying "did you see the parents' cars in the car park? We are the poor ones and some of the parents look down upon us ... But when it comes to their children, we must solve all their problems." Lemmer (2009:95) also recorded one parent who complained that, "I don't have time but I am willing to pay." When parents neglect, and are found lacking in, their parenting roles the children's academic life is adversely affected.

Although parents are at liberty to adopt any parenting style, as discussed in 2.3 on the theoretical frameworks below, Ofole (2017) encouraged parents to adopt the authoritative parenting style as it has shown some positive relationships with children's academic outcomes. Dorfman and Jacobs (2015) identified parentification as a threat to achieving authoritative parenting styles. Parentification, or role reversal as stated by Dorfman and Jacobs (2015), is a situation that manifests itself when the child adopts the role of being a parent and the parent looks up to the child for emotional, moral, physical and even intellectual support. Parenting is, therefore, paramount and the first stepping stone for parents to becoming involved in their children's education.

Parents may also play a role in their children's education by facilitating and opening communication channels with all stakeholders in the school system. This, according to the typology of Epstein et al (1997), is the second role that parents play in communicating with the school. Lemmer (2013) emphasised the importance of forming teacher-parent partnerships. A partnership, according to Lemmer (2013), is when teachers and parents work together in a relationship that is founded on mutual co-operation and shared responsibility.

Lemmer (2013:30) identifies the term parent-teacher partnership as a term that is also sometimes used as a synonym for parental involvement. Lemmer (2013), however, elaborates on this by stating that a partnership is characterised by a mutual relationship between two parties or groups of individuals and has shared responsibilities that demand co-operation from both sides. Lemmer (2013:35) also noted that there are different scales of parent-teacher partnerships. Lemmer (2013) identifies the following degrees of partnership:

- a) Effective partnership;
- b) True partnership;
- c) Authentic partnership; and
- d) Meaningful partnership.

As a result of these different degrees of partnership and involvement, Lemmer (2013) believes that this sometimes causes teachers and parents to remain confused about their expected roles in that partnership. Consequently, such a partnership is more often punctuated by tension and mutual annoyance with each other. Lemmer (2013:31) concludes that, when the different degrees of partnership are used interchangeably, they sometimes lead to ambiguity and confusion. In this research study the term parental involvement will not be used to imply power sharing and an equal contribution to the learner's academic progress. It will rather be used to mean some form of collaboration and engagement by parents towards the academic life of their children.

For any partnership to achieve desired goals, communication channels need to be open. Parents have a role to play by ensuring that they communicate with the school effectively. Lemmer (2009) also indicates that parents have a duty to monitor, report and account for learner non-school attendance. This important role of parents is



sometimes undermined by what Ofole (2017) calls a lack of a sense of competence by the parents.

Ofole (2017) describes competent parents as parents who evaluate themselves favourably with respect to their role performance. On the other hand, parents who are not competent lack confidence. Competent parents have the confidence to reach out to the school and to teachers. Ofole (2017) then concludes that the more the parents become competent the more they develop the capacity to support the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of their children.

Although parental competence is not related to the academic status of parents, Ofole (2017) advocated for programmes that are aimed at developing parents' skills that lead to increased competence and positive parenting practices. Ofole (2017) also encouraged open communication lines between parents and children in the home environment.

Parents also have a role when they volunteer in the school's activities. Volunteering is the third order in Epstein's typology. Morolong and Naong (2011) emphasise the importance of volunteering at school. Parents may volunteer to clean the school, monitor punctuality by learners or in whatever other way. Such acts of volunteering may not affect only the children of the volunteering parents but all learners at the school.

Assisting with homework is one of the important roles of parents as they get involved with their children's education. Assisting with learning from home is the fourth order in the typology of Epstein et al (1997). Pretorius and Machete (2004) recommend that parents must instil a reading culture among their children. Assisting with homework should not be seen as a domain only for the literate parents. Even illiterate parents can play a meaningful role in assisting with homework. Vogel (2008:10) advises that, even when a parent is illiterate, a child who reads to the parent improves his or her own reading skills. In this case, the parent has only to provide a listening ear even when he or she cannot comprehend what is being read.

Some girls become pregnant whilst still at school. Parents are also expected to help such children. Ofole (2017) highlighted that, in such circumstances, parents are expected to take care of the grandchild to allow the young mother to concentrate on school work. Ofole (2017) also added that parents also have a role to play by reducing

the number of household chores by the child so that more time is allocated to school work.

Parents, according to SASA of 1996, are also expected to avail themselves for leadership positions in the school's governing board. Decision making forms the fifth order in the typology of Epstein et al (1997). Morolong and Naong (2011), however, observe that parents at times find it difficult to embrace this governance role and further note that young parents and middle aged parents show a better interest in the school governance than the old parents who adopt an 'anything goes' type of attitude. The younger parents, therefore, engage more with teachers and the school.

Schools call for parents' meetings to improve the running of the school. Parents are expected to attend meetings and make meaningful and productive contributions to the school. Such meetings, especially in public schools, are poorly attended, and the poor attendance is sometimes traced back to the schools themselves. This was observed by Morolong and Naong (2011:252) who recorded some parents saying, "The principal side-lines you when you seem to differ with his or her opinion. What is the use of attending such meetings then?"

The last aspect on the typology of Epstein et al (1997) is the role that parents play in collaborating with the community. Such activities involve being members of community forums that are aimed at nurturing children to conform to societal norms and limit deviant behaviour. This area of parental involvement provides a conducive macro environment for teachers to execute their teaching obligations effectively.

One major challenge of parental involvement in learner achievement is the absence of clear government policies on how parents are expected to get involved. Okeke (2014:4) points out that the government policy documents are not clear on how schools should motivate and embrace parents as partners whose participation in school matters is an integral element for learner success. Okeke (2014:5) contrasts the South African system with some policies in the United Kingdom where parents may risk being prosecuted if they are found to be neglectful with regard to their parenting obligations. As a result of no clear Government policy, Lemmer, (2007:218) then adds that "schools and families seldom share the same perspectives on what is wanted and needed." Such a scenario tends to favour the schools as they would then determine unilaterally the parameters in which parents would get involved. Dietz

(1997:2), as cited by Lemmer (2007), then argues that, when parents are limited to a specific form of involvement, it will bring resentment. Singh and Mbokodi (2011:142) share a divergent view by noting that black parents were aware of their obligations to be progressive participants and stakeholders in the administration of the schools. They, however, could not fully participate as some viewed themselves as not having the required intellectual threshold capacity to make significant contributions. Singh and Mbokodi (2011:43) cite one teacher in their research who remarked that “parents cannot help with the work they themselves do not understand.”

Communication is yet another factor that causes a challenge to parental involvement. Singh and Mbokodi (2011) indicate that the line of communication between schools and parents was largely one way. The form of communication is always from the school to the parents. They add that, even in that same one-way communication channel, the form of communication was usually written in English. Such a form of communication would systematically alienate illiterate parents and was, therefore, highly ineffective. Some learners, according to Singh and Mbokodi (2011:14), tend to feel embarrassed by their illiterate parents and would “prefer not to have their parents visiting for fear of ridicule by other learners.” In some extreme cases such learners would opt to rent a parent in place of their own. When such a scenario is allowed to manifest, it then renders the whole parent-teacher meeting a futile exercise.

Despite the large volume of research on parental involvement, researchers still experience a challenge as they cannot pinpoint the actual actions with regard to parental involvement that will directly contribute to improved learner achievement. Schneider and Coleman (2018:1) note that very little has been established on the actual actions that parents do with their children either at home, school or elsewhere that contribute to improved learner academic output.

It has already been observed that parental involvement has positive consequences on learner discipline and their self-image. However, there is no direct link of these positives to learner achievement and performance. Baker and Soden (1998), as cited by Domina (2005), concurred with Schneider and Coleman (2018:1) when they highlighted that “researchers have generally agreed that parental involvement activities are associated with stronger educational outcomes but it is not clear that these activities cause educational success.” Such inconclusive findings have

prompted other researchers to examine the effects of parenting practices and parenting styles on learner performance. It may also be a futile exercise or even an insult to parents to accuse them of not getting involved without clarifying and offering them a blueprint of how and in what ways they can be involved. If necessary, parents may need to be workshopped on the desired parenting styles and practices that yield maximum learner achievement.

Parental involvement has also been observed to decline as children grow older. Drotsky, Kubayi Pule and Toriola (2014:1568) indicate that parental involvement declines with age among learners. Parents tend to be more involved when learners are still young. Drotsky et al (2014:1569) then offer possible reasons for such a decline. Learners, once they become adolescents, will increasingly give more time to be with their peers and the changes in their cognitive and physical abilities make them less dependent on their parents.

### **2.2.3 The role of parents in the teaching and learning process, and the learner**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children UNCRC, (1993) as cited by Detrick (1999), identifies a child as any human being under the age of eighteen years. The same convention outlines children's basic rights to include the right to be raised by parents. Parents are obliged to fulfil their parenting mandate and responsibilities. However, in some instances, children who are supposed to be recipients of such rights to be raised by parents end up being a threat and stumbling block with regard to parents fulfilling their parenting obligations.

Bester (2007:178) warns that "the fact that adolescents gradually detach themselves from parents does not mean they do not need their parents' emotional support". This sentiment is also reinforced by Bester (2007) who observes that learners in the Further Education and Training phase (FET) who had a heart-warming and inspiring association with their parents had a positive self-image and encountered fewer problems at school.

Not all children are always keen to be assisted by parents. Some learners even display some annoyance with their parents when they visit their schools. Singh and Mbokodi (2011) pointed out that some children feel embarrassed by the presence of their parents in the vicinity of the school. Singh and Mbokodi also observed that such

learners would deliberately avoid having their parents visiting the school to avoid humiliation from other learners. In some extreme cases, according to Singh and Mbokodi (2011), such learners would go to the extent of even renting a parent to avoid their own parents from visiting the school.

When learners adopt resentment towards their own parents, it limits the parents to becoming mere spectators in welfare of their own children's education. According to Ofole (2017), learners who show no confidence in their own parents are unlikely to give correct feedback on school activities to the parents. They then effectively create a challenge to parental involvement.

Adolescence, as already defined in chapter one, is a critical age where the youth become increasingly detached from their parents in favour of establishing stronger bonds with their peers. The process of establishing a new support system with peers at the expense of the family sometimes has catastrophic consequences. Some adolescents have been reported to abuse their parents physically.

Olivier (2000) reported that ten percent of all adolescents hit their parents each year. Olivier (2000) also noted that the authority of parents is being eroded and parents are increasingly becoming powerless to challenge this developing trend. The study by Olivier (2000) also noted that victims of such abuse have a tendency to conceal the abuse to themselves.

Abuse of parents by their children is not only limited to physical attack. Olivier (2000:47) identified verbal and none verbal threats as part of the abuse. Such abuse, according to Olivier, includes activities like throwing objects such as weapons, pushing the parent and even the use of dangerous weapons like knives and guns against the parents. Warner (1981:139), as cited by Olivier (2000), indicates that parent abuse also takes the form of emotional battering. This kind of abuse may take the form of personal and family property theft. Some teenagers shout and throw cursing words to their vulnerable parents.

Olivier (2000) identified a number of theories that attempt to explain the causes of these attacks on parents by their own children. One of the major cause of violence is substance abuse. Parents are supposed to be the ones who reprimand their children in the event of any manifestation of deviant behaviour. However, when the hunter

becomes the hunted, then parental involvement in education becomes almost impossible. Once such a situation is allowed to prevail, parents may then be forced to outsource their parenting responsibilities to other institutions such as professional counsellors and others, like community leaders. In some instances, parents may give up all together on their children's education leaving them entirely in the hands of school teachers.

Parentification or role reversal, as defined by Dorfman and Jacobs (2015:), is another threat to parental involvement. Dorfman and Jacobs (2015:121) define parentification as a situation in which a child adopts parenting responsibilities and starts to parent the parent. Such a situation may emanate from a situation where the parent may fail to cope with issues, such as divorce, leading to the parent becoming disorientated. The parent may eventually lose control of his or her own life leaving the child to adopt a superior role of being a parent to his or her parents. Dorfman and Jacobs (2015:124) observe that parentification may lead to the child's not concentrating in class and ultimately performing poorly in school work.

The relationship between the parent and the child determines the effectiveness of the parent's involvement in the child's education. A heart-warming relationship and an authoritative parenting style has been observed to yield positive academic results. However, children themselves have also been observed to form stumbling blocks when their parents try to get involved in their education.

### **2.3 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.**

This research will adopt the comprehensive frame for school, family and community partnership of Epstein et al (1997) as the theoretical framework that will guide this research. According to Morolong and Naong (2011:236), this framework by Epstein et al (1997) is universally recognised and considered as the international benchmark on parental involvement. According to this framework parental involvement should be evaluated at six levels. These include parenting, communication, volunteering, learning from home, decision making as well as collaborating with the community.

#### **a) Parenting**

This type of parenting involves the creation of a home environment that supports the school needs of children. It also involves basic child rearing skills. It has been observed by Spera (2005:127) that different parenting styles and practices yield

different academic results from learners. Spera (2005:132) identifies two broad parenting styles. These are the love-oriented and the object-oriented styles. The love-oriented style, according to Spera (2005), is characterised by praise and warmth as well as emotional affection. This type of style involves the use of intrinsic motivation to stir or propel learners to strive for excellence. On the other hand, object-oriented styles make use of tangible objects to motivate learners. Object-oriented styles put the emphasis on extrinsic motivation. Spera (2005:134) goes on to identify three sub-groups of parenting styles, namely:

- Authoritative;
- Authoritarian; and
- Permissive parenting style.

Authoritative styles are characterised by warm and responsive parents. Parents who are authoritative offer support and affection to their children. Spera (2005) points out that authoritative styles tended to yield better results in learner achievement. With regards to authoritarian styles, Spera (2005) notices that these parents are neither warm nor responsive. These parents are strict. Lastly, there is the permissive parenting style. According to Spera (2005), these are parents who are generally lukewarm and seem unconcerned about their children's welfare. They tend to adopt a *laissez-faire* approach. Ndebele (2015:29) seems to suggest that these parenting styles change as learners grow older. During the foundation phase, parents tend to adopt the authoritative style. However, Ndebele (2015) also observes that the authoritative style is common among the high income group.

Some parenting styles and practices have an adverse effect on achieving positive parental involvement outcomes. Lemmer (2009:102) commented that some schools often need to "parent parents" by offering them professional advice on how to be guide their children. This guidance can take the form of helping parents in setting rules at home.

#### b) Communicating

This involves the act of communicating with the school and with parents. It also involves the parent-child communication in the home environment on school and non-school matters.

c) Volunteering

This encompasses all activities done by parents out of their free will to assist the school. Volunteering can also take place within the school premises or even beyond.

d) Learning at home (homework)

This involves parents' active engagement in helping children with their homework. It might involve listening to children reading, monitoring the adherence to personal timetables and checking that homework has been done.

e) Decision making

This includes activities that parents do in the governance of the school, such as being part of the school governing body (SGB).

f) Collaborating with the community

This involves all acts done by parents as community members that assist the learning process of learners. Such activities may involve curbing drug and alcohol abuse and maintaining the general neighbourhood security of the area. Parental involvement will, therefore, not be limited to basic parenting but include a wide range of activities by parents.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

The influence of parental participation on the academic achievement of learners has been a subject of immense scrutiny among researchers. Notwithstanding the huge volumes of research findings about the phenomenon, the degree of the significance of parental participation on the academic performance of learners particularly among adolescents remains inconclusive and sometimes confusing. On one hand, some researchers observe positive relationships between involvement and performance while, on the other hand, some noted a negative relationship. The literature review has also revealed that some researchers actually discovered that there was no relationship between involvement by parents and the academic performance by the learners. Different parenting styles and practices were also reviewed in so far as they influence performance of learners.

The comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnership by Epstein et al (1997) was identified as the theoretical framework that guides most research into parental involvement. The framework identifies six levels of parental



involvement. This research will adopt the framework by Epstein et al (1997) as the theoretical framework that will guide this research. The review of literature also brought to the fore that parental involvement tends to differ among people of different socio-economic backgrounds with those from poor backgrounds being less involved. In spite of all the challenges that are imbedded in this very controversial topic, there is a general acceptance that parental influence is a necessary ingredient for learner academic performance. This ingredient is generally lacking in previously disadvantaged communities where it is mostly needed. This justifies the need for further research to ensure that it is embraced by both teachers and parents in such communities.

The review of the related literature also explored why parental involvement is not always easy to achieve. Learners and educators themselves have been identified as potential stumbling blocks in involving parents. Some learners have been known to abuse their parents physically and emotionally thereby alienating their parents from the learning process. Teachers' attitudes have also been identified as a factor that discourages parents from being actively involved in their children's' education.

The next chapter will discuss the research design and the methodology that will be used to in an effort to answer the research question on what the causes of a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners are. The interpretivist paradigm will be adopted as the overall conceptual framework in which this study will be located.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter explored the relevant literature that applies to the research question on what the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners are. The comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnership by Epstein et al (1997) on parental involvement was identified as the theoretical framework that guides this research study.

This chapter outlines the research paradigm that offered the worldview in which this study is located and the research approach as well as the research design that was used to achieve the research aim of investigating the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. The methods used during data collection in this study were also analysed. The methods of data analysis, sample size, sampling procedures as well as issues regarding trustworthiness are discussed in this chapter.

The interpretivist paradigm was adopted as the overall conceptual framework that underpin this research. The research approach was exclusively qualitative with recorded interviews being the main source of data collection.

The population size from which participants of this research was sampled was drawn from three high schools in the Johannesburg central district targeting progressed grade 11 geography learners. Six learners were purposively sampled from this population.

The researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the UNISA ethics committee to ensure that issues of confidentiality and participants' consent were adhered to.

### **3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This research was based on the interpretivist paradigm as the overall conceptual framework. A research paradigm, as described by Mack (2010:5), is "the overall conceptual research framework." There is no single, universally-agreed way of acquiring new information and knowledge. Thanh and Thanh (2015:25) state that there is "no particular right or correct path to knowledge." They also add that there is no special method of acquiring new knowledge. People's approach to problems is

informed by their preconceptions and assumptions relative to that problem, hence Mackenzie and Knipe (2006:2) define a paradigm as “a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research.”

The interpretivist paradigm as highlighted by Thanh and Thanh (2015:24) is rooted in seeking people’s experiences, understanding and perceptions about a phenomenon under investigation. This paradigm is crucial and more relevant to this particular research as it engages the parents of the progressed grade 11 Geography learners, the progressed learners themselves as well as the educators of the same progressed learners on their perceptions about the causes of a lack of parental involvement among the learners. Thanh and Thanh (2010) hinted that the interpretivist paradigm is more subjective than objective. This means the results may not be generalised to other environments outside the delimitations of the research. The findings, however, offer rich insights into the schools in which the research was conducted.

In spite of the assertion that the interpretivist paradigm is subjective, Willis, Jost and Nilakanta (2007) emphasise that the primary objective of the interpretivist paradigm is to value that subjectivity. This research aimed to put value on the importance of participants' subjective thinking on the causes of a lack of parental involvement as it is that subjectivity that influences the way they will ultimately become involved or fail to become involved with their children’s education. This paradigm was critical as it afforded parents of progressed learners an opportunity to highlight the reasons why they fail to get involved in their children’s education which may ultimately cause the children to fail to achieve minimum requirements for promotion into the next grade.

It is fundamental to value the reality as seen by the subjects or participants of an investigation. The adopted theoretical frame which is an interpretivist paradigm leaves no room for speculation into why parents fail to fulfil their parenting obligations as identified in the typology of Epstein et al (1997). Thanh and Thanh (2010) argue that it is the same subjects or people who own their experiences that we value. This research study sought to put value on the views of parents, teachers and learners of participating schools in so far as it relates to the causes of lack of parental involvement in the academic performance of progressed grade 11 geography learners. Morehouse (2012) perceives that the interpretivist paradigm enables researchers to get an in-

depth insight from the respondents rather than relying on mere statistical figures that are often held in high esteem by quantitative researchers.

This research study sought to put less emphasis on statistical figures but rather to value the actual perceptions of respondents. The interpretivist paradigm as the overall conceptual framework was crucial in this research study as it offered valuable in-depth insights into the schools that were involved with regard to the causes of a lack of parental involvement among their progressed grade 11 Geography learners. The findings, however, may not be generalised to other schools but may offer local understanding on the limiting factors affecting parental involvement.

One key attribute of an interpretivist paradigm is that it affords respondents an opportunity to highlight their personal understanding of their local environment. This positive manifestation of the paradigm is echoed by McQueen (2002 :17), as cited by Thanh and Thanh (2015:24), by pointing out that “interpretivist researchers seek methods that enable them to understand in depth the relationship of human beings and their environment and the part those people play in creating the social fabric of which they are part.” In this particular research study, the aim was to investigate the causes of a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners. This was an investigation into the relationship that parents have with the schools where their children are enrolled. McQueen (2002), as cited by Thanh and Thanh (2015), then says that the interpretivist paradigm views social interactions through “a series of individual eyes.” This was achieved by having interviews with the parents, learners and educators of the progressed learners as opposed to the use of questionnaires that are often analysed to determine trends and draw conclusions from different statistical interpretations.

One important attribute of the interpretivist paradigm is that it acknowledges individual and group opinions. Mack (2010:8) comments that “social reality is seen by multiple people and these multiple people interpret events differently leaving multiple perspectives of a phenomenon.” This makes it necessary to value every individual’s opinion, and this study sought to acknowledge and treat every response or contribution as being significant. Mack (2010) states that the interpretivist paradigm helps researchers to understand and explain existing phenomena through the eyes of different participants. Each parent of a progressed learner had unique reason for

non-involvement which needed to be acknowledged for the benefit of the school and the child. The underlying objective of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand, as distinct from explaining, the phenomenon using statistical computations.

Despite these positive attributes of the interpretivist paradigm, it has its own inherent limitations. Mack (2010) argues that the results of an interpretivist paradigm research study are difficult to generalise in other situations. This is primarily because this paradigm does not make use of a hypothesis and, therefore, cannot be tested. No hypothesis was accepted or rejected at the end of the research. Mack (2010) observes that many researchers, particularly quantitative proponents, question the overall benefit of the interpretivist paradigm given that the results of such an investigation cannot be generalised elsewhere. Notwithstanding these limitations, the research findings offered in depth insights and recommendations for the specific participating schools. Mack (2010:8) emphasises that the interpretivist paradigm “creates local theories for practice rather than generalizable findings.”

The interpretivist paradigm as the overall conceptual research framework helped immensely to bring to the fore the challenges that only the participating schools’ encounter with parental involvement and to make recommendations that are relevant to those schools. The value of the interpretivist paradigm is also enhanced when the researcher is able to bracket himself or herself from the research.

This research endeavoured to highlight the perceptions of parents on the causes of their non-involvement in their children’s education. The learners and educators themselves also outlined their perceptions on parental involvement further justifying the adoption of the interpretivist paradigm as the most suitable paradigm.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

This research on parental involvement and learner achievement used an exclusively qualitative approach. Bryman (2017:57) describes a qualitative research study as one that “is typically associated with participant observation, semi and unstructured interviewing, focus groups, the qualitative examination of texts, and various language-based techniques like conversation and discourse analysis.” Many researchers, among them Glesne and Peshkin (1992), Silverman (2000) and McQueen (2002), as cited by Thanh and Thanh (2015), believe that interpretivist philosophers tend to incline towards the qualitative approach as they acquire knowledge especially on

educational matters. This research study on the causes of a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners was expressly an educational topic and, therefore, fits perfectly into the qualitative approach. Thomas (2003:6) believes that a qualitative approach “portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever changing.” Parental participation or non-participation is not a constant phenomenon but is always changing. A qualitative approach was, therefore, always needed to explore current traits.

Another attribute of the qualitative approach is that it affords participants a platform to express their lived experiences. Munje and Mncube (2018:81) emphasize that “The approach provides an opportunity to explore participants’ wealth of experience, their intentions, beliefs, values and reasons for doing what they do, and making meaning from them.” This research study was meant to get the perceptions of parents, teachers and learners on what could be the cause of lack of parental involvement among Geography grade 11 learners.

In view of these attributes of a qualitative approach, it became imperative to hear the actual voices of parents, learners and teachers involved and not to rely on statistical figures that may not be relevant at different times in people’s lives. This research study I, therefore, made use of interviews so as to hear the actual voices of the participants on what causes non-involvement by parents of progressed Geography learners.

Some researchers, in particular Creswell, Clark, Gutmann and Hanson (2009), argue that qualitative research methods are critical in getting the inside understanding of individual members or groups in a society. Creswell, Clark, Gutmann and Hanson (2009:4) point out that the qualitative approach “is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” As has already been noted in the literature review, parents and teachers share mixed feelings on their respective roles with regard to learner achievement. The qualitative approach, therefore, was the most appropriate as it afforded the parent wing an opportunity to make a contribution and justify why they do things the way they do. Once parents have been afforded the opportunity to outline their reasons for non-participation, the participating schools would then have an informed viewpoint on this missing component in the success of progressed learners. This clearly helped to bring out information and arguments that the game of statistical figures is unable to provide.

When a researcher adopts a qualitative approach, he or she will automatically become a participant in that research. He or she gets to observe and empathise with the participants. He or she has an opportunity to observe all forms of communication including non-verbal. Thanh and Thanh (2015:26) then add that the, “researcher is likely to take an interactive role where he or she gets to know the participants and the social context in which they live.” Recorded interviews, done face-to-face or via platforms such as ZOOM or WhatsApp video call, provided such opportunities to observe participants’ reactions and emotions. These interviews also enabled the interviewer to observe the home environments of the participants. The creation of a conducive home environment is the first level of parental involvement as outlined in the typology of Epstein et al (1997).

With the above peculiarities of a qualitative approach, the researcher was more than convinced that the perceptions about the lack of parental involvement among parents of progressed grade 11 geography learners was given the necessary attention and maximum scrutiny. Thanh and Thanh (2015:25) also recommend that, in educational research, “a scholar who wishes to investigate and perceive the experiences of a class of students or teachers should adopt a qualitative approach.” This recommendation was adopted wholly in this research as it was exclusively qualitative in nature.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

In the light of the choice of an interpretivists paradigm and a qualitative approach, the phenomenology research design became a natural choice. According to Eddles-Hirsch (2015), phenomenology forms the foundation of a qualitative research and is also a research method in its own right. Eddles-Hirsch (2015:251) explains that phenomenologists are “more concerned with first hand descriptions of a phenomenon than they are in resolving why participants experience life the way they do.” As alluded to in the literature review, there is tremendous evidence to suggest that socio-economic backgrounds have a bearing on levels of involvement by parents. This research study did not dwell on why this is so but simply investigated the causes of lack of parental involvement as perceived by the parents themselves, their children and by the educators. Eddles-Hirsch (2015:251) then goes on to say, “the task of a phenomenological researcher is to uncover the essence of the phenomenon that

he/she is attempting to study." The emphasis on lived experiences was also highlighted by Yüksel and Yıldırım (2015:2) who pointed out that phenomenology "evolved into a process that seeks reality in the individual's narratives of their lived experiences in the phenomena." In this research study the phenomenon was to uncover the different perceptions on the lack of parental involvement among the progressed grade11 geography learners from the three stakeholders, namely learners, educators and parents.

A phenomenological research design, as stated by Eddles-Hirsch (2015:252), offers "rich, detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being investigated." Observations of emotions and non-verbal communications which are attributes of qualitative research helped the researcher to achieve such detailed realities. Groenewald (2004:42) stresses that "to arrive at certainty, anything outside immediate experience must be ignored". Phenomenology, therefore, enabled the researcher to focus only on what participants identified as the reasons for the absence of parental involvement among the progressed grade 11 Geography learners. Groenewald (2004:43) then adds, "The aim of phenomenology is the return of the concrete captured by the slogan 'back to the things themselves'."

Phenomenology as a research design, therefore, did not afford the researcher an opportunity to speculate but provided concrete results as seen in the eyes of the participants. Concrete results are derived when one goes back to the things which, in this case, are the parents, the teachers and the learners at the selected schools. Koopman (2017:1) also pointed out that "science education researchers put too much emphasis on the mathematical nature of knowledge and consequently lose its roots in lived experiences." Phenomenology in this research focused on the lived experiences of the selected participants.

### **3.5 RESEARCH SETTING**

This research had a specific research setting. Lemmer (2013) defines a research setting as a period of time when the research was conducted. The setting also includes the type of literature that is used and reviewed. The setting for this research is summarized in the table below.



ITEM	SETTING
Population	Grade 11 geography progressed learners
Literature reviewed	Parental involvement and learner achievement
Period	January to November 2020

Table 3.5 Research setting

The year 2020 brought in some unexpected events in the school system. These unforeseen events ushered in what became known as the new normal. On 5 March 2020 South Africa reported its first case of COVID 19. By 16 March 2020 a total of 62 cases had been confirmed in the country. This exponential rise in COVID 19 cases led the government of the country to declare a state of disaster. This announcement of the state of disaster led to a total lockdown of the country. All public institutions, including schools, were closed on 18 March 2020.

The government hoped then that the lockdown would lead the Coronavirus coming to a dead end and eventually halting the spread of new Covid-19 cases. The lockdown, according to the government, achieved the objective of delaying the peak of infections. By June 2020 the number of new cases had continued to rise unabated. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) was then forced to delay the opening of schools. In June the department of Basic Education adopted a phased in approach to reopening of schools.

Initially only grade 12 and 7 were scheduled to go back to school on 6 May 2020, but owing to a lack of Covid-19 preparedness the two grades officially reopened on 8 June 2020. These two grades had to adhere to strict social distancing protocols as well as COVID 19 protocols as recommended by the department of Health. On 24 August 2020 Grade 11s were allowed to go back to school. The learners had to adhere to the strict COVID 19 regulations which included a recommended 1.5 metre social distance seating plan in the classrooms. A maximum of 20 learners were expected in every classroom. This new requirement meant that a classroom that had

previously had more than 20 learners had to be split into two to comply with the new COVID 19 regulations. Schools suddenly found themselves without enough classrooms to maintain the 20 learner per class threshold requirement.

The DBE then offered schools a number of post COVID 19 lockdown models for the reopening of schools. These models were aimed at ensuring that the 2020 academic year would not be wasted completely. Schools, depending on their peculiar circumstances, could adopt either of the three models:

platooning;

alternating days per week; and

bi-weekly rotational attendance.

The key determining factor in choosing a model was to ensure that every school would operate at 50% capacity or less to ensure that the social distancing protocols were maintained at all times.

DBE defines platooning as, “schools or a schooling system in which two separate sets of teachers and pupils use the same school buildings, one set in the morning and one in the afternoon”. This system required additional numbers of teachers as additional classes had been added.

Alternating days per week, according to the DBE, meant that different grades of learners would alternate classes on different days of the week. This meant that a school, with the exception of grade 12, would opt to have other grades coming to school a few days a week but making sure that all grades had an opportunity to be taught at least once a week.

The last model was identified as bi-weekly rotational attendance. According to the DBE, this model meant learners would attend school on alternating weeks. A grade would attend school two weeks in a month. The DBE recognised the shortcoming of the second and third options as having serious monitoring challenges especially for parents who go to work.

Schools involved in this study opted for the second model of alternating days per week. Grade 11 learners were allocated two days per week. On the particular days when learners were expected to be at home, educators were required to provide the

learners with work that they had to do at home. Parents had to ensure that this work was done and teachers would be expected to offer solutions to work done at home.

The Covid-19 ushered in a new 'normal' way of teaching and learning. The involvement of parents in their children's education suddenly became not an option but a vital component for teaching and learning to be effective. Covid-19 and the subsequent new way of schooling put parents at the centre of their children's education. The tables had changed with educators having less contact time and parents having a significant role in their children's education. Five days a week the child had the parent monitoring school work with educators limited to only two days a week.

### **3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

#### **3.6.1 Population**

The investigation started with identifying the target population from which the research was to be done. Kombo and Tromp (2006:17) define a population as "the entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common." It is from this population that a sample for investigation was drawn to answer the main research question. Eddles-Hirsch (2015:254) also emphasised that in the phenomenological tradition, only participants who had experienced the phenomenon should be subjected to the research. In this study on the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners, the population had shared the same phenomenon of having been progressed from grade 10. The parents and educators of the same learners formed part of the population. The population under investigation was made up of learners doing Geography in grade 11 and the parents of the same learners including the educators of the same learners at the three selected schools.

The parents, learners and educators from three schools formed the population from which the study was conducted. According to Groenewald (2004), in phenomenology the phenomenon under study should determine not only the method of the research but also the type of participants to be involved in the study. Such participants should also have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. In this research the phenomenon under investigation related to the causes of a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. Therefore, the population was limited to grade 11 Geography learners who were progressed and

their parents from whom involvement was expected. The parents of the same learners automatically formed the population size from which the parent sample was drawn. The parent sample population was, however, dependent upon the sample learner population as only parents of selected learners were involved. Educators of the same learners also formed part of the sample population as learner achievement cannot be detached from the educators' inputs and how they embrace parental involvement. One Geography teacher of the participating learners from each school formed the population size of the teachers. This made a total of three grade 11 Geography teachers.

Three schools were selected to participate in the research. There were a total of 548 learners who sat for the 2019 grade 10 end of the year examinations among the three schools. 364 of the 548 were doing Geography. A total of 175 learners did not pass the subject to qualify for automatic progression to grade 11 in 2020. From the 175 learners, only 44 learners met the progression minimum requirements and were progressed to grade 11. Among the 44 learners a mini interview was conducted to identify learners who had not received some form of parental involvement in 2019. A total of 31 learners confirmed that they had received minimum parental support and their parents were hardly involved in their learning process during that year. These 31 learners and their parents formed the population size from which the sample was drawn. The grade 11 Geography educators also formed the population size from which the educator sample size was be drawn.

### **3.6.2 Sample size and sampling procedure**

Once the population was identified, the sampling commenced. Neuman (1997:201) explains the process of sampling as a process that involves choosing participants that will be included in the research. Eddles-Hirsch (2015) states that the samples do not have large numbers to enable in depth study and understanding of the human lived experiences. A sample is, therefore, the precise group of individuals that participate in the investigation.

There is widespread agreement among interpretivist philosophers that between two to ten participants are sufficient to draw sufficient conclusions in a phenomenological research design. Eddles-Hirsch (2015) explains that the phenomenological approach aims to give detailed descriptions of the phenomenon hence small numbers are

recommended. Boyd (2001) suggested that 2-10 participants are adequate to reach saturation point. Nonetheless, Eddles-Hirsch (2015) advises that the sample size must have enough participants to offer divergent experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. This line of thought is also embraced by Creswell (1998) who, however, recommends “long interviews of up to ten people.” It should, nonetheless, be noted that Creswell (1998) was not specific on what is considered a long interview. Mapetla and Francis (2013) reported that they had interviews of between 30-40 minutes in their phenomenology study on teenage pregnancy.

Purposive sampling is a method that most researchers recommend in phenomenology. Dorfman and Jacobs (2015) applied voluntary purposive sampling in their research on adolescents’ lived experience on parental divorce. The nature of their research demanded that participants had to volunteer to be participants. Groenewald (2004) argued that since phenomenology targets participants who have lived experience of the phenomenon, it follows then that the sample must be confined only to those who have experienced that phenomenon. Such a determination can be done only through a pilot research study to identify the target group. A pilot research study was implemented to determine learners who had not received any form of parental involvement in the previous year. In the event that participants may not be enough or may refuse to be involved for whatever reason, Groenewald (2004) recommended snowballing as a method to bring in more participants.

Snowballing is a method of increasing the sample size through recommendations from the existing sample group. The participant may identify and recommend others who are known to have shared and experienced the same phenomenon.

Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) added that qualitative researchers generally opt for and deal with small, purposefully-selected samples. The rationale, as they argue, is that small samples help to enrich the findings.

This research study attempted to maintain a balance between the recommended small sample size and the need to have enough participants to offer divergent experiences. Six learners were selected from the population of 31 learners as discussed in section 3.6.1. above. Each of the three schools provided two learners as participants. The six learners were selected through voluntary purposive sampling. This helped to ensure that no learner was coerced into taking part in the research.

The parents of the participating learners automatically formed the sample size for the parents. A total of six parents participated in the research.

One Geography educator from each selected school teaching the identified learners formed the sample size of participants from the educator wing. This means a total of three teachers participated in the research.

The sample size was, therefore, be comprised of six progressed grade 11 geography learners, the respective parents of those selected learners and three educators. This made a total of 15 participants.

### **3.7 INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

The interviews were recorded using a recording device. Eddles- Hirsch (2015:254) states that, in a phenomenological research, "an in-depth interview transcript forms the basis of the data." However, consent and assent from participants was considered a pre- requisite condition before the recording of interviews took place. This is shown in appendix E for consent, appendix F for assent, and appendix G letters to parents. Eddles-Hirsch (2015) further pointed out that research questions should focus on the participants' perceptions and should be open ended. In this research the interviews were unstructured so as to enable in-depth insights into the parental involvement phenomenon. Where responses were deemed to be too brief, or leading to a dead end, follow up questions were utilised. This same approach was used with the parents and the selected educators. Appendix B1 provides the research questions aimed at parents, appendix B2 research interview questions for educators and appendix B3 interview questions for learners.

All participants were interviewed via video recordings, either Zoom or WhatsApp video calls. The participants were asked to choose the convenient times for them before scheduling a meeting. This was done in order to comply with the recommendations by the Gauteng Department of Education regarding Covid-19 social distancing protocols.

The interview questions followed three phases. Koopman (2017) recommended three interview techniques that help to bring the best results.

- a) Laddered questioning

This type of questioning, according to Koopman (2017), sets the scene of the interview. Questions that are asked at this stage help to make the participant feel comfortable and to be relaxed. The researcher at this stage ensures that his/her demeanour will not be threatening to the participant.

b) Knowledgeable or invasive questions

These set of questions are then asked once the participant is relaxed. Koopman (2017) gave examples of questions that may be asked at this phase. These include questions such as, 'what do you think? and how do you feel?'. Such questions are aimed at extracting the participant's perceptions.

c) Questions pertaining to personal philosophy

The third set of questions seek to appeal to a participant's personal philosophy. They focus on personal beliefs, values and deep-seated perceptions about the phenomenon. Such questions, according to Koopman (2017), form the core of the interview.

During the whole interview process, Koopman (2017) also recommended that the researcher must try as much as possible to remain silent. This helps to avoid getting the participant distracted. It also limits the researcher from infusing his or her personal pre-suppositions into the participant's line of thought.

Groenewald (2004) also suggests that the researcher should always endeavour to take some field notes. These notes include, among other issues, when the interview was done, who was involved, where the interview took place, and the key ideas that were highlighted during the interview. Such field notes help to preserve a record of events should there be a loss of memory on the chronology of events. In this research study the notes were confined to the pseudonyms of the participants and key ideas that were raised. The place where the interviews were conducted was insignificant since all interviews were conducted via video conferences.

### **3.8 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

An interview schedule was designed to bring about uniformity and to ensure that participants would receive the same questions. This interview schedule adopted the approach that was used by Eddles-Hirsch (2015). All participants were given the same

opening questions. Thereafter, follow up questions were forwarded. These differed from one participant to another as was determined by the situation. The schedule below was followed.

PARTICIPANT	DATE	TIME	VENUE
P1	18/07/2020	16:30	Zoom meeting
L1	18/07/2020	17:15	Zoom meeting
P2	19/07/2020	17:15	Zoom meeting
L2	20/07/2020	16:30	Zoom Meeting
P3	25/07/2020	16:00	WhatsApp video call
L3	27/07/2020	16:45	Zoom Meeting
P4	27/07/2020	17:50	Zoom Meeting
L4	05/08/2020	15:20	Zoom meeting
P5	05/08/2020	17:25	WhatsApp video call
L5	06/08/2020	16:20	WhatsApp video call
P6	06/08/2020	18:25	Zoom Meeting
L6	10/08/2020	15:30	Zoom Meeting
E1	11/08/2020	19:30	WhatsApp video call
E3	11/08/2020	17:25	WhatsApp video call
E2	12/08/2020	18:45	WhatsApp video call

Table 3.8 Interview schedule



### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations related to the consent by participants to participate without any form of duress or blackmail. Issues of confidentiality and privacy were also given due recognition before the research commences.

#### **3.9.1 Informed consent**

Obtaining ethical clearance was the starting point that was fulfilled before the research study commenced. This clearance was granted by the UNISA Ethics Committee. Once the clearance had been granted, permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to embark on the research within the schools under its auspices was then sought. The GDE research request form is captured as Appendix A. Thereafter, the School Governing Boards of the respective schools were also requested to grant permission for the research study to commence within the school precincts in which they have direct jurisdiction.

All participants were issued with written consent forms as reflected in appendix E for parents and educators and appendix F for learners. The contents of the forms were read to all participants before they were asked to sign as an acknowledgement that they were not participating under duress.

#### **3.9.2 Privacy and confidentiality**

Participants were informed in writing that they have the right to insist that their names were not be recorded anywhere during the data collection and that no one, apart from the researcher and their parents or guardians, would know about their involvement in the research. Pseudonyms and codes were used throughout the research and caution was taken to ensure that the identity of participants was not revealed to other participants and no one was able to connect them to the answers they gave. An assurance was given to participants that their answers would be given a code number or a pseudonym and they would be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Participants were also assured that their responses would be reviewed by institutions tasked with making sure that any research adheres to acceptable ethical standards. Such individuals include the researcher, the research supervisor, the transcriber where necessary, and the Research Ethics Review Committee. Records that may

have the potential of revealing their identity would be available only to the researcher, unless the participants themselves gave permission for other third parties to view the records.

Participants were also guaranteed that, should their responses be needed for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and or conference presentations, their names will not be used.

All participants, either teachers or parents, were informed of the intentions and purposes (Appendix C) of the research and were guaranteed their privacy and the confidentiality of information. Any information obtained was to be used strictly to achieve the aims and objectives set out and for no other purpose beyond the scope of the research. Participants were then requested to fill in and sign voluntary consent forms acknowledging that they were not coerced in any way to participate in the research. Parents also gave their consent to have their children take part in the research. All participants, whether teachers, parents or learners, were also informed of their right to abort the research proceedings at any given time if they felt uncomfortable or compromised as a result of their participation. This right was also granted to participants by Eddles-Hirsch (2015) when the researcher reported that participants were allowed to abort the interviews without any form of reprisal. Participants were also guaranteed that no harm or victimisation as a result of their withdrawal from participation in the research study would take place.

Audio recordings were utilised during the research. The researcher first sought the permission of participants before any recording was done. This transparency was also applied by Groenewald (2004) who added that such audio recordings must be done away from noisy environments.

### **3.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Explication of phenomena was applied as a means of analysing data. This is in line with the recommendations of Groenewald (2004) who advocated for the use of the term explication of data as opposed to the more conventional use of the term data analysis. Groenewald (2004) subscribes to the views of Hycner (1999) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and believes that the term analysis has limiting undertones in phenomenology. Hycner (1999) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that the term analysis may be misconstrued to mean breaking into components that may ultimately

bring the unintended loss of vital information. Explication, on the other hand, involves the “investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole”. Hycner (1999:161) noted that analysis may also imply that some responses are more relevant and appropriate than others.

As recommended by Groenewald (2004), the explication process was done in five stages:

- Bracketing and phenomenological reduction;
- Delineating units and meaning;
- Clustering of units of meaning to form themes;
- Summarising each interview and validating it; and
- Extracting general and unique themes and making a composite summary.

a) Bracketing and phenomenological reduction

Bracketing and phenomenological reduction was the first step in the explication of phenomena. Groenewald (2004) believes that bracketing reduces subjectivity. It is a systematic way of removing the researcher from the proceedings of the research thereby making the participants’ perceptions to be of paramount importance. Koopman (2017:13) equated bracketing to “a looking glass” in which the researcher observes what is going on in the glass without him or her attempting to enter and become a participant in that glass. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction also takes place during the transcribing process where an audio recording device would have been used. Groenewald (2004) stated that bracketing helps to ensure that presuppositions will not be clouded by the participants’ views. During this process, the researcher consciously bracketed himself from the views of the respondents.

b) Delineating units and meanings.

After the bracketing and phenomenological reduction process, the next phase of the explication process involved discerning meaning from the recorded interviews. Groenewald (2004) reckons that this is the critical phase in explicating data. During this process redundant information and units are discarded and eliminated. In this research delineating units and meanings was achieved through reading and listening to recorded audio and transcribed notes many times. This strategy was recommended by Koopman (2017) who adds that this will help the researcher to get a holistic picture of the whole interview.

c) Clustering of units

The next step of the process is concerned with the clustering of units. Koopman (2017) called these units Natural Meaning Units (NMUs). The NMUs represent the main ideas raised by the respondent. This involved the process of identifying similar topics and recognising any overlaps in the participants' responses. An attempt was made to identify common themes in the participants' responses.

d) Summarise each interview

Groenewald (2004) identifies the summarising of each interview as the fourth phase in the explication process. Summarising involves isolating general themes from any unique themes in the responses. Participants were given a copy of their transcribed interview to validify and confirm the truthfulness of captured audio and transcribed notes.

e) Extracting general and unique themes and making a composite summary

A composite summary of all interviews was then done after all interviews had been summarised. Koopman (2017) recommends that the researcher must make an attempt to link the responses to existing theories for corroboration and vindication. The researcher sought to corroborate the interview outcomes to the available literature on the topic in order to substantiate findings.

### **3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS.**

The researcher implemented a couple of measures to ensure that the validity and trustworthiness of the dissertation was not compromised. Daniel and Onwuegbuzie (2002) advised that phenomenologists must try to avoid the use of the term reliability of research findings but rather use the term trustworthiness of findings. This is because such findings cannot be tested. Eisethart and Howe (1992:645) stressed that "in qualitative research, information gleaned from observation, interviews and the like must be trustworthy." Daniel and Onwuegbuzie (2002:5) added that trustworthiness "involves looking for a high degree of consistency in the findings and presenting an explanation for factors to which any inconsistent findings might be attributed."

Bracketing the researcher from the research findings is one method that has been applied to improve trustworthiness. Eddles-Hirsch (2015) describes bracketing as conscious act by the researcher to remove his/her preconceptions and beliefs from

the participants' views. Groenewald (2004) recommends that the researcher must make an effort to bracket him or herself from the research. Groenewald (2004) recommends that bracketing be done both during the interview process as well as during the transcribing period in the event that a recording device was used. In this instance, the researcher consciously bracketed himself from all proceedings so as to avoid his personal views from filtering into the findings. Koopman (2017:13) also added that "what is required from a phenomenologist is to behave like someone watching a film without analysing the technical aspects."

After the transcribing process, participants were issued with the transcribed copy so as to validate that their views were not altered or diluted. Creswell (2013), as cited by Padilla-Diaz (2015), hint that corroboration under phenomenology is a widespread strategy used to enhance trustworthiness. Padilla-Diaz (2015) goes on to consolidate this view by emphasising that corroboration helps to clarify that what was transcribed is a true reflection of participants' views.

Language challenges may also have a limiting effect on the trustworthiness of results. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) engage peer reviews and member checks to ensure that trustworthiness is not compromised. The research assistant, as discussed in 3.7. above, helped with the peer review process.

This research study also adopted the strategy of Dorfman and Jacobs (2015;119) of ensuring that trustworthiness is achieved as tabulated below. Dorfman and Jacobs (2015) identify five key strategies that must be addressed to achieve trustworthiness. These five strategies include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. This research study endeavoured to ensure that these strategies were addressed.

Credibility requires that the topic is correctly recognised and depicted. In this research study the topic is on the causes of a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. From a population of 31 learners a sample size of six learners, six parents and three teachers constituted the total number of participants for the investigation.

The second strategy pertains to transferability. Transferability seeks to ascertain whether findings can be transferred from one situation to another. To achieve this,

responses from participants were compared and supported by relevant existing literature.

The third strategy that was adopted by Dorfman and Jacobs (2015) relates to dependability. Dependability is ability to leave an audit trail. This means that the data collected must be available for audit purposes. In this research study the trail is available from audio recordings and transcribed notes of such recordings.

The fourth strategy that Dorfman and Jacobs (2015) apply is confirmability. Confirmability ensures that there is a connection between the unprocessed data and the completed study. The completed study must mirror what is in the audio recordings. These are evident in the research presentation and findings as well as the summary and conclusion.

Lastly, Dorfman and Jacobs (2015) identify authenticity as the last strategy to achieve the trustworthiness of a research study. The research study must capture what the phenomenon is from the participants' point of view. It must not confuse the researcher's personal views with those of the participants. In this study the researcher consciously bracketed himself from the proceedings so that his personal beliefs and preconceptions were not included in the findings.

### **3.12 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY**

This chapter has discussed the interpretivist paradigm as the overall conceptual framework or worldview in which this study is located. The chapter also discussed the qualitative approach and the phenomenology design that was used during the study. The rationale for the adoption of this design is justified on the basis that phenomenology deals with first-hand information from respondents.

This chapter also outlined the research setting as one that will be done in 2020 among progressed Grade 11 Geography learners. 31 of the progressed learners formed the population size. Six learners and their respective parents were sampled using the voluntary purposive sampling strategy. This sample population was interviewed and interviews were audio recorded following the UNISA ethical policy after approval by the ethics committee.

Explication, as recommended by Groenewald (2004), was used during the data analysis and interpretation process. This chapter also gave issues of trustworthiness and validity due consideration.

The next chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the research findings. The analysis focus on answering the research question relative to what the causes of lack of parental involvement are among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. Themes emanating from research interviews are discussed.

## **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter outlined the interpretivist paradigm as the overall framework that guided this research. A qualitative research approach and a phenomenology research design were used. A sample of 15 participants was interviewed using video platforms such as ZOOM and What's App video calls to gather data. Data was analysed using the explication technique as recommended by Groenewald (2004). The explication process proceeded in five stages. The first stage involved bracketing and phenomenological reduction followed by delineating units and meaning, and the third stage involves the clustering of units of meaning to form themes. The fourth stage involved summarising each participant's interview and validating it. The last stage saw the extraction of general and unique themes and the making of a composite summary of responses from participants.

- Bracketing and phenomenological reduction;
- Delineating units and meaning;
- Clustering of units of meaning to form theme;
- Summarising each interview and validating it; and
- Extracting general and unique themes and making a composite summary.

This chapter presents participants' views on the causes of a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. Six learners, six parents and three teachers were interviewed through video calls in line with the recommendation of the Gauteng department of Education to adhere to the Covid 19 social distancing protocols.

Explication of data was done in five stages following the recommendations of Groenewald (2004) discussed in chapter 3. Eleven questions were posed to parent participants, eleven were given to teachers, and learners had to respond to eight questions. These questions were aimed at seeking answers to the main research question on what the causes of a lack of parental involvement among the progressed grade 11 Geography learners are. The responses from participants formed the basic themes for analysis using the explication criteria as recommended by Groenewald (2004).



Firstly, an overview of the questions posed to the participants was done. An explanation of the rationale for forwarding such questions was done during this stage. This also assisted in explaining why such questions were necessary in answering the main research question. This was then followed by an analysis of how bracketing was done to ensure phenomenological reduction and to guarantee that the researcher's personal views were not entangled with the views of participants. The third stage involved delineating units and meanings. This was then followed by the clustering of the units to determine basic themes that emerged from the interviews. A summary of each interview was also done in line with the explication process. Basic themes from the interviews were then extracted. Lastly, a discussion on the findings and a linking the findings with available literature was done.

The following questions were forwarded to parents after they had confirmed that their children involved in the investigation were indeed in grade 11 after being progressed from grade 10.

#### **Question 1**

Do you think your progressed child has the potential to pass Geography in the current academic year?

The first question sought to establish whether the parents of the progressed children were optimistic that their children were capable of passing grade 11 without having to rely on progression from the Gauteng Department of Education. This question was pertinent as it was necessary to establish whether parents felt any justifiable motivation to invest their time, financial, and emotional resources in becoming involved in their children's education. The way parents devote their time and invest both financially and emotionally in their children's education comes first on the typology of Epstein et al (1997) with regard to parental involvement as discussed in chapter 2. In the event that the parents had gone on to indicate that there was no hope of their progressed children ever achieving at least the minimum promotional requirements, then any form of parental involvement would become irrelevant and of no effect. The research would have reached a dead end. This question was, therefore, critical as it formed the foundation for the remaining questions.

#### **Question 2**

How did you feel when you learnt that your child did not meet the minimum promotional requirements in grade 10 but was progressed?

The second question that parents had to respond to pertained to their personal reactions when their children failed to meet minimum promotional requirements and ended up being progressed. The question was fundamental as it sought to elicit whether parents had their own expectations and set targets for their children to do better. It was also necessary to establish whether parents were keen to support their children to achieve the targets. If parents had shown an uninterested attitude and approach, then it would have been a futile exercise to ask parents to get involved in their children's education.

Once parents had acknowledged that there was room for improvement, then this question formed a foundation for them to explore how they could turn the performance around for the benefit of the child.

### **Question 3**

What do you think are some of the reasons that might have led your child to fail to meet the minimum promotional requirements?

This question pertained to what might have led learners to fail to meet minimum promotional requirements and end up being progressed to Grade 11. The question aimed at extracting from parents what they perceived to be decisive factors that were missing in the previous year that needed to be strengthened in the 2020 academic year to ensure that no repeat of the previous year's results would manifest.

### **Question 4**

Do you always attend parents' meetings called by the schools? Provide reasons for non-attendance.

This fourth question dealt with the more conventional and recognised way of parental involvement. It focused on the parents' attendance at organised school parental meetings. Parents had to ascertain whether they regularly attended these meetings. Reasons for regular attendance or non-attendance were also solicited from parents. Ultimately, an interpretation of the causes of regular attendance or non-attendance was made and recommendations thereof were developed. When parents and teachers meet to discuss challenges facing the school, it fosters communication

between the two parties. Communication comes second on the typology of parental involvement by Epstein et al (1997).

### **Question 5**

What is your personal opinion of the nature of the parents' meetings? Do you think they help much in improving learner performance?

It was hoped that by analysing the parents' views on the nature of these meetings it would help to identify some the underlying causes of why some parents choose to stay away from these meetings and, therefore, become less involved in their children's education. When parents perceive the meetings as less fulfilling, then they may develop a resentment towards the same meetings. This ultimately may inversely affect the other levels of parental participation on the typology of Epstein et al (1997), namely volunteering, learning at home, decision making as well as collaborating with the community.

### **Question 6**

Are there any recommendations that you can put with regard to the holding of such meetings?

This question was aimed at soliciting from parents those aspects of the schools themselves that the parents found distasteful and unwelcoming for meaningful engagement with the school. It was a crucial question towards answering the main research question relative to what the causes are for a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. The question also had an effect on the first level of parental involvement on the typology of Epstein et al (1997).

### **Question 7**

When learners fail to achieve minimum promotional requirements, who should shoulder the blame?

The question was aimed at determining whether the parents felt they had a role to play in their children' education. Parents who would put the blame entirely on the school believed they had no role to play in their children's education. Conversely, parents who believed that they too should shoulder the blame would have a reason to get involved.

### **Question 8**

Do you think parents have a role to play in the academic performance of a child?

Parents were asked whether they thought they had a role to play in the academic performance of their children. It was anticipated that the parents would acknowledge that parental involvement was a vital ingredient in the academic performance of the learners. If there appeared to be a chance that the parents had an overwhelming consensus that they were not a significant factor in the academic achievement of their learners, then this would seriously challenge the available literature on which this research was founded. The literature available had already shown that parental involvement is a vital component in learner performance. The answer to the main research question on the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners would then be limited to one reason only, namely ignorance on the part of the parents.

On the other hand, if participants acknowledged and endorsed parental involvement as a requisite ingredient in the academic performance of the learners, the researcher then probed further to discover the different ways in which parents were already involved. In addition, the researcher elicited the different expectations from the participants for improved parental involvement.

### **Question 9**

Elaborate on your expectations from educators that may make you wish to be more productive as you get involved in your child's education.

The question pertained to parents' perceptions on how teachers may become a stumbling block and so diminish their enthusiasm to be more involved in their children's education. This question was posed to parents in order to extract their expectations from teachers so as to facilitate and improve their parental involvement obligation. This question was triggered by the literature that suggested that parents sometimes are unaware of what is expected of them and that the schools themselves sometimes act as barriers to parental involvement.

### **Question 10**

Do you believe parents should be blamed when children fail to perform well at school?

The question was aimed establishing whether parents felt they too had a responsibility to play a role in their children's education. The degree of responsibility placed by the

parents would also determine the level of participation in their children's education. Parents who see greater responsibility participate more. On the other hand, those parents who feel they must not be blamed may not see the need to participate in their children's education.

### **Question 11**

Do you think teachers regard you as partners who can make a significant contribution to the school's activities?

This question was aimed at getting perceptions on the parent-teacher relationships. A relationship where one partner feels inferior and undermined is likely to yield resentment on one part. However, a partnership where both sides feel respected and valued is likely to produce maximum participation from both sides.

The next eleven questions were posed to educators of the progressed grade 11 learners.

### **Question 1**

Teachers are always blamed for the poor academic performance of learners. What are your personal feelings about this?

This question was intended to bring out teachers' perceptions on the degree of responsibility placed on them. If teachers were prepared to take full responsibility, then they needed minimum support from parents. It would also mean that they were prepared to acknowledge that non-participation by parents could be traced back to their own actions.

### **Question 2**

Do you feel that there are issues that are beyond your control that make learners underperform?

The question was a follow up to the first question and solicited from the teachers other contextual factors within their local areas that played a significant role in learner performance especially among the progressed geography learners. Some of the contextual factors fall under level 3 to 5 on the typology of Epstein et al (1997) on parental involvement.

### **Question 3**

Do you sometimes invite parents to school? If yes, what are some of the reasons that lead you to invite the parents? If not, why don't you ever invite parents to school?

The rationale for asking this question was to establish whether teachers felt it was important to involve parents in the teaching and learning process. It was also aimed at establishing whether the reasons for inviting parents was to engage them on issues related to academic performance or whether it was done as a routine ritual with no implications for the academic performance of learners.

#### **Question 4**

Do you discuss the agenda of the meeting with parents or do you decide it alone?

This particular question had the intention of finding out whether teachers considered parents as stakeholders who also were capable of making decisions regarding the academic welfare of their children. It was also important to establish whether parents were justified in feeling undermined during such parent-teacher meetings as was reported in the literature review.

#### **Question 5**

Are parents always welcome to visit the school? What are the opportunities available for parents to come to the school and initiate meetings?

The question also sought to establish whether the schools themselves were not a hindrance to parental involvement.

#### **Question 6**

What are your personal feelings about the nature of parent-teacher meetings? Briefly describe what goes on in a typical parents' meeting at your school.

During the review of literature, parents often had reservations about the ritualised nature of parents' meeting. Some parents felt they are usually called to endorse what the school or teachers want. This question was aimed to establish whether the schools and teachers consciously or unconsciously undermine the parents.

#### **Question 7**

Do you believe parents are a vital component in the academic achievement of the learners?

It was necessary to reflect on the actions of teachers in relation to their beliefs. This question was forwarded to educators to establish whether the teachers' beliefs could be corroborated by their actions.

### **Question 8**

How would you describe the nature of parental involvement at your school in general and in your subject in particular?

This question was aimed at verifying whether teachers themselves felt parents were doing enough to improve the academic performance of the learners.

### **Question 9**

What are your personal expectations from parents as you endeavour to improve the academic performance of your progressed learners?

This question offered an opportunity for educators to highlight those aspects that needed to be strengthened from the parent wing to ensure an enhanced parental involvement strategy.

### **Question 10**

In your view, why are parents not fully involved in their children's education in your subject?

In phenomenology the researcher puts value on the respondents' subjective views. The aim of this question was to understand the lack of parental involvement from the perspective of the teacher and to put value on that subjective view.

### **Question 11**

What would be your recommendations to the school, parents and any other stakeholder to get parents to become more involved in their children's education?

The question was put forward to give educators their own recommendations to ensure an improved parental involvement strategy.

The last set of eight questions were posed to the progressed grade 11 learners.

### **Question 1**

What could have contributed to your being progressed to grade 11?

This question tried to establish from learners whether they could identify factors, and, among them, a lack of parental involvement that could have contributed to their not meeting the minimum promotional requirements.

### **Question 2**

Did your parents attend all parents' meetings last year? If not, do you know why?

The aim of the question was to establish whether learners could corroborate what their parents had said. It was also to establish whether the non-attendance could be blamed on the learners or on a lack of communication between the school and the parents.

### **Question 3**

When your parents come to school or when they do not come, what are your personal feelings about it?

This question was significant as it helped to bring to light whether learners were comfortable about having their parents getting involved or not.

### **Question 4**

Is your home environment conducive to learning?

Parenting is the first order in parental involvement on the typology of Epstein et al (1997). The creation of a conducive learning environment is part of parenting. This question was aimed at establishing whether learners were comfortable in the home learning environment.

### **Question 5**

Do you personally believe that your parents can help you achieve better results?

This question was significant as it tried to bring to the fore the learners' own subjective views on the significance of parental involvement.

### **Question 6**

In what ways do you think the school or teachers should involve parents in the schooling process?

The slogan of phenomenology as a research design as discussed in chapter 3 is 'going back to the things'. It was important to hear the voices of the learners themselves with respect to parental involvement.



### **Question 7**

Among the following stakeholders, parents, educators and peers, which segment do you consider to be helping you most in your schooling journey and which one is least significant?

The question was aimed at establishing the degree to which learners themselves place the role of parents in their education.

### **Question 8**

Are there any recommendations that you would want to make to your parents and educators to have more parental involvement at your school?

The research study was about getting participants' views. Therefore, even the recommendations had to be a reflection of participants' perceptions.

## **4.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis was done following the five explication stages identified by Groenewald (2004). Firstly, the researcher had to systematically bracket himself to enhance phenomenological reduction. This was aimed at ensuring that the findings were not clouded with the researcher's own views. After bracketing, the second stage was to delineate units and meanings. The third stage of the explication of phenomena was the clustering of units to form themes. This was then followed by summarising each interview and validating it. Lastly, the researcher extracted general and unique themes and made a composite summary.

### **4.2.1 Bracketing and phenomenological reduction**

Interviews were audio recorded. Thereafter, the researcher took time to listen to and transcribe what the participants had said. Responses were recorded without additions or subtractions and, where necessary, the exact words in the vernacular were quoted. The responses of individuals in certain vernacular languages were then outsourced to vernacular teachers to have these vernacular words translated into English. By outsourcing translation to specific individuals in the specific vernacular languages, the researcher ensured that no misrepresentation of ideas took place. This was crucial in the bracketing and phenomenological reduction process. Participants were then issued with the transcribed scripts of their interviews to ascertain that their views had

been captured correctly. This was also done to reduce the chances of the researcher's personal subjective views finding their way into the final research findings.

#### 4.2.2 Delineating units and meanings.

The researcher listened to each audio recording four times. During every session, notes were written and eventually a holistic view of respondents' perceptions was drafted. Contrasting views were identified from parents, educators as well as learners. This particular phase was aimed at identifying the key aspects that enabled the research question on what causes lack of parental involvement to be answered. It meant that any responses that were not relevant to the research question were discarded.

The table 4.2.2 below gives a holistic summary of responses on parents' perceptions.

Question	Parent responses
1. Do you think your child has the potential to do better this year?	All participants' responses were in the affirmative.
2. How did you feel when you learnt that your child did not necessarily pass grade 10 but had ben progressed?	All participants expressed disappointment.
3. What do you think are some of the reasons that might have led to your child not passing grade10?	Lack of information, lack of cooperation between the school and the parents, human rights given to learners, home environment and poor communication between the school and the parents were the major reasons that were cited for poor learner performance.
4. Do you always attend parents' meetings called by the school?	Only one parent had an answer in the affirmative.
5. Do you think the parents' meetings help much in improving the performance of the learners?	Only two parents had responses in the affirmative.
6. Are there any recommendations with regards to parental involvement?	The need for respect from educators, more information, improved communication

	channels and the need to be considered as capable individuals by educators were major issues that were raised.
7. When learners fail who should shoulder much blame?	All parents were unanimous that both parents and teachers should take full responsibility.
8. Do you feel as a parent you have a role to play in the academic performance of your child?	All responses were in the affirmative.
9. Elaborate on your expectations from educators that may make you to be more productive in your parental involvement role.	Better communication and a better sense of respect from educators were the main highlights.
10. Do you believe parents should be blamed when learners underperform at school?.	Parents were unanimous that they too should take responsibility for under-performance of learners.
11. Do you think educators regard you as equal partners who can make significant contributions in their children's education.	Parents generally felt undermined by educators.

Table 4.2.2 Summary of parents' responses

Table 4.2.3 below gives a composite summary of responses on educators' perceptions

Questions	Educator responses
1. Teachers are always blamed for the academic underperformance of learners. What are your personal feelings about this?	Educators expressed mixed feelings. Two felt it was grossly unfair to put all the blame on educators. Only one conceded that educators had to take responsibility and shoulder all the blame.

<p>2. Do you feel there are issues that are beyond your control that make the learners underperform.?</p>	<p>Educators expressed factors in the macro environment as some of the issues that they cannot control but are significant in learner performance.</p>
<p>3. Do you sometimes invite parents to school? What are some of the reasons that lead you to invite parents to come to the school?</p>	<p>Discipline and poor performance by learners were identified as the major reason for inviting parents.</p>
<p>4. Do you ever discuss the agenda of a meeting with the parents?</p>	<p>All educators believed that parents were afforded opportunities to contribute freely during parents meetings including bringing new issues to the agenda.</p>
<p>5. Are parents always welcome to visit the school? Are there opportunities available for parents to come and initiate meetings?</p>	<p>All responses were in the affirmative. Educators maintained they had an open door policy to allow parents to come to school freely.</p>
<p>6. What are your personal feelings about the nature of the parent-teacher meetings?</p>	<p>Educators believed that the meetings were always engaging and characterised by mutual respect from either side.</p>
<p>7. Do you believe that parents can be a vital component in the academic performance of learners?</p>	<p>Educators had mixed feelings. Lack of the required subject content was cited as a major stumbling block. However, the educators believed that teaching was like a three legged pot that required that the educators, parents and learners work together for an improvement in the academic performance of learners.</p>
<p>8. How would you describe the nature of parental involvement at your</p>	<p>Educators believed the parents were not fully involved in their children's</p>

school and in your subject in particular?	education especially among the progressed learners.
9. What are your personal expectations from parents as you endeavour to improve the academic performance of the learners?	Educators expected parents to take complete charge of their children's education especially during the covid-19 pandemic when educators' contact time with learners had been significantly reduced to allow for social distancing protocols.
10. In your view why are parents not fully involved in their children' education?	Lack of interest and ignorance as well as work commitments were cited as the major reasons for non-participation.
11. What are your recommendations for encouraging parents to become more involved?	Better communication, improved school image and improved awareness programmes were given as strategies to get parents to be more involved.

Table 4.2.3 Summary of educators' responses

Table 4.2.4 below gives a composite summary of responses on learners' responses

Question	Learner responses
1. What could have contributed to your being progressed?	Learners blamed themselves and their home environment for the poor performance.
2. Did your parents attend all meetings?	Only two confirmed that their parents attended the parents' meetings.
3. When parents come to school or fail to come to school, what are your personal feelings about this?	Half the participants expressed happiness when parents visited the school. Some expressed discomfort when parents visited the school.
4. Is your home environment conducive for learning?	All participants felt their home environment was not ideal for learning.

5. Do you believe that your parents can help you to achieve better results?	Participants expressed mixed feeling with some highlighting the level of education among parents as a limiting factor while other welcomed support and encouragement as necessary for academic progress.
6. In what ways do you think the school and teachers should involve parents in your schooling process?	Participants believed that teachers should give parents an outline or programme of action of what needed to be done in the subject every term.
7. Which stakeholder (parents, educators and peers) has contributed significantly in your schooling journey?	Educators were identified as the dominant stakeholder contributing the most.
8. Are there any recommendations to improve parental involvement?	Improved communication between the school and parents was identified as the major recommendation.

Table 4.2.4 Summary of learners' responses

### 4.2.3 Clustering of units

The following interview units identified:

- a) Optimism towards the prospects of progressed learners achieving at least minimum promotional requirements;
- b) Perceptions on progressed learners;
- c) Possible reasons for learners ending up progressed;
- d) Attendance by parents at school meetings; and
- e) Reasons for non-involvement of parents outside the scheduled parents' meetings.

#### 4.2.4 Summarising each interview

As indicated in 3.9, pseudonyms were used to ensure the confidentiality of participants. The table 4.3.4 below shows the pseudonyms of participants during the interviews.

Parent participants	Educator participants	Learner participants
P1	E1	L1
P2	E2	L2
P3	E3	L3
P4		L4
P5		L5
P6		L6

Table 4.2.5

##### 4.2.4.1 Parent interview summaries

###### P1 interview summary

P1 was cognisant of the fact that teenagers go through a lot in their physiological and psychological development. These developmental changes required support from both educators and parents to give the learners confidence. P1 also observed that black parents, in particular, harbour high hopes that their children will transform their social and economic wellbeing after school but hardly support their children to make that dream come true.

P1 also reported that she never attends school meetings. She felt that these meetings were not goal oriented but were just organised on a perfunctory basis.

###### P2 interview summary

P2 felt that school organised meetings were very important in the school life of their children. She was of the opinion that the school meetings provided parents with insights into how to meet the teachers half way. P2 felt strongly that, in the unfortunate event of a child failing to meet the minimum promotional requirements, then only the child should be blamed. P2 felt it was irresponsible for parents to delegate the future of the children to other people or to teachers.

###### P3 interview summary.

P3 put the reasons for poor performance at the doorstep of the child. She felt teenagers are not prepared to take advice from parents. She also blamed her inconsistent attendance to school meetings on the attitude of teachers who tended to give special attention to parents whom they know. She also felt that, in most cases, the resolutions of some meetings were never implemented thereby further demotivating the parents. P3 blamed the basic human rights afforded to children as being an impediment in their obligation to instil discipline among their children.

P4 interview summary.

P4 did not feel that, as a parent, she had much to offer. She felt her child's destiny was at the mercy of the more qualified teachers. This participant did not think educators were giving her and all parents in general any confidence that they had a role to play in the academic life of their children. P4 felt they as parents they remained on the fringes of their children's academic life owing to the non-availability of information from the educator.

P5 interview summary

P5 was the opinion that the whole Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) system was focused mainly on Grade 12 academic performance. This parent noted that lower grades, including grade 11, were largely side-lined by the school system. Parental involvement was focused mainly on grade 12 putting other grades at a disadvantage. This participant also observed that parental involvement was mostly limited to non-academic issues such as the cleanliness of the school and sporting activities. P5 also felt some parents were not willing to participate fully in their children's education for fear of victimisation of their children. This participant also thought educators only celebrated learners who were naturally gifted and ignored the average and progressed learners.

P6 interview summary

P6 revealed that she does not have enough time to attend school meetings and to get involved in her child's education. Her non-participation is compounded by the fact that school meetings at her school are usually impromptu and do not offer parents enough time to prepare. P6 also expressed some reservations about the nature of the meetings which she felt did not offer a one-on-one parent and teacher interface. She



felt the meetings are generalised. P6 also observed that at primary schools the educators are more concerned and involve parents better than they do in grade 11.

#### 4.2.4.2 Educator interview summaries

##### E1 interview summary

E1, while acknowledging that parental involvement was key in the teaching-learning process, nonetheless revealed that he hardly let them get involved. The teacher believed that parents are mostly needed for disciplinary issues. Having gained a lot of experience in his teaching career the teacher felt he could now handle disciplinary issues without the need for parental involvement. E1 also believed that grade 11 learners were now old enough to manage their own academic lives without any parental involvement. This participant also noted that whenever parents are invited to the school their attendance is always disappointing.

##### E2 interview summary.

E2 viewed a classroom as a microcosm of the broader society. He felt that, in order to understand why learners behaved in particular ways, one needed to have a better understanding of the local environment where the learners came from. The family needed to be the starting point. E2 also noted that many parents and teachers were ignorant of their constitutional rights to be involved in their children's education. The teacher felt schools were not doing enough to help parents to be more involved.

##### E3 interview summary.

E3 observed that the Covid-19 pandemic demanded that parents became involved in their children's education more than before. The educator reported that as educators they now had less influence in the academic performance of learners as they now had less contact time with learners. E3 also felt that the academic staff at the school had an obligation to improve the image of the school to the general public. A poor school image tended to discourage parents from participating. E3 also noted that progressed learners generally had non-supportive parents.

#### 4.2.4.3 Learner participants interview summaries

##### L1 interview summary

L1 indicated that it was not always possible for her parents to get involved. She was staying with her mother and, due to work commitments, it was always difficult for her

mother to get involved. Her father was not staying with her making it difficult for him to participate in her academic life.

#### L2 interview summary

L2 indicated that he had himself to blame for ending up being progressed. He was convinced that the teachers had done their best to assist him in his education. L2, however, did not believe his semi-literate parents could do much to help him in his academic life. He attributed his failure to meet minimum promotional requirements to the excessive use of social media platforms such as What's App and Facebook.

#### L3 interview summary

L3 expressed discomfort when it came to parental involvement at the school. The learner was of the opinion that the presence of a parent within the school premises was an indication that trouble was looming. L3 revealed that, whenever he received letters that requested the availability of parents at school, he would sabotage the request by not delivering the letter to the intended recipients.

#### L4 interview summary

L4 was satisfied with the parental support she was getting. She also appreciated that certain challenges were beyond her parents' control. Such challenges included a neighbourhood that was hostile to a conducive learning environment, a neighbourhood that had taverns operational all day long generating a lot of noise. L4 also indicated that her relatives were also involved in her learning process.

#### L5 interview summary

L5 indicated that he did not have a very healthy relationship with his parents. This uncomfortable relationship made it impossible for the parents to involve themselves in his academic life. L5 also indicated that he lives a nomadic life moving from one relative to another. Such a nomadic life made it difficult for whoever was *in loco parentis* at any given time to assist him in his academic progress.

#### L6 interview summary

L6 expressed a very healthy relationship with her parents. She confirmed that her parents were always forthcoming to help her with whatever was requested by the school. She indicated that her parents occasionally checked her books even though sometimes they could not comprehend what was supposed to be done.

## 4.2.5 Themes

### 4.2.5.1 Optimism towards the prospects of progressed learners achieving at least minimum promotional requirements

This theme was derived from the first question. All participants were asked whether they had hope and belief in the potential of progressed learners to be promoted without having to rely on progression. It was important that participants had to express optimism and hope in the progressed learners to pass Geography in particular. Participants first needed to express the belief that the progressed learners had the intellectual threshold to warrant any emotional, financial or time sacrifice from all stakeholders to ensure that underperformance would be thwarted. Once parents, educators and the learners themselves had expressed no hope, then it would have been a futile exercise to explore the relevance of parental involvement to a sample population that had lost hope.

Participants P1, P2, P4 and P6 were convinced that the progressed learners were capable of doing much better in Grade 11 Geography. While acknowledging that the 2020 academic year had been a challenging year owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, one Geography educator, E1, was particularly optimistic about achieving better results in 2020. The educator attributed the optimism to the fact that the Geography syllabus, just like other syllabi in the curriculum, had been trimmed to accommodate time that had been lost owing to the country's lock down. Grade 11s were out of school from 18 March to 24 August 2020.

Another educator, E2, even thought that the Covid-19 pandemic was a blessing in disguise. The educator noted that the pandemic had necessitated that classes had to be smaller in line with the Department of Health's social distancing protocols. E1 explained, "*we used to struggle with classes sometimes of up to 45 learners. Now we all have a maximum of 20 learners per class.*" The educator felt smaller classes were easier to manage than the previously larger classes that they had to deal with even though there was the limited contact time.

Despite the smaller classes, E1 was cautiously optimistic that learners would meet minimum expectations. The teacher attributed this cautious approach to the fact that they now had direct contact with their learners fewer days than during the pre-Covid-19 era. This is because their school, like all other schools under the study, had

adopted the model of alternating days per week with grade 11s being expected at school only twice a week.

One educator, E3, had observed a change in learners' behaviour during the post Covid-19 era. The educator felt learners had previously exhibited great enthusiasm and were excited by school work during the pre-Covid-19 era. However, after the outbreak of the Coronavirus, that enthusiasm had faded away. E3 noticed that, *"these learners behave as if the year is already over. They think because of Covid-19 it is going to be a pass one pass all situation."* The educator suspected that most Grade 11 learners had developed a self-entitlement with regards to automatic progression to Grade 12 irrespective of the grade 11 final results. Some learners even believed the 2020 academic year could not be saved but had already been concluded. This sense of accomplishment caused some learners to become neglectful of their school work and many felt the year no longer needed significant efforts from them. These contextual factors demanded that parental involvement had to be strengthened in order to bring the best out of the learners.

Another educator, E1, drew comparisons between learners who were doing science subjects that included Physical Sciences and Mathematics as core subjects on one hand and the other learners who had history and tourism as core subjects on the other hand. The educator observed that 8 out of 10 of the Geography learners in the science group had remained positive irrespective of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was in sharp contrast to the General stream that had History and Tourism as Core subjects. This group was reported as having approximately 5 out 10 learners who had remained relatively interested with school work in the post Covid-19 school days. E1 reported that, *"the general stream is problematic. The majority of them are progressed yet they don't care at all. They behave as if we owe them something and must beg them always."* At the same school, learners were grouped into three categories according to the combination of subjects that they were doing. Learners were either Sciences (Physical sciences and Mathematics), Commercial (accounting and Business studies) or General (History and Tourism). E1 commented that the learners doing General subjects come to school, *"just for fun!"*. These learners were reported as not seeing any meaning in coming to school. This sentiment was echoed by E2 who was convinced that the target for the General group was going to be difficult to achieve.

Incidentally both educators observed that the General stream had the most progressed Geography learners.

E3 indicated that the cases of absenteeism in the post Covid-19 had increased substantially. While acknowledging that some learners had comorbidities that made them vulnerable to Covid-19 and required that they remained cautious and stay at home, others took that as an unwarranted excuse to avoid coming to school. E3 added, *“most of these learners were progressed and are very weak. They take advantage of the situation knowing that no one will make them accountable for being absent. They will simply tell you they had symptoms and, therefore, were self-isolating.”* In as much as they could afford to falsify their condition to educators to avoid coming to school, they could not use the same strategy if their parents were fully involvement.

E3 also noted that, despite the fact that classes had been trimmed to a maximum of 20 learners per class, the number of classes had consequently also increased. The DBE could not provide extra teachers to cater for the increased number of classes. This situation had forced some schools to deploy inexperienced teachers and sometimes teachers who were not qualified to teach particular subjects. E3 then hinted that parents were now needed more than ever before to be not only active participants but to even become their children’s teachers at home.

The progressed learners who were interviewed, on the other hand, seemed to confirm what E2 had expressed saying learners seem to anticipate an automatic progression to grade12. L1 bemoaned the adoption of ‘shifts’ (alternating days) as having been catastrophic to their education. L1 admitted that she was failing to adjust to the new system of ‘shifts’ saying the shifts had made learning very difficult. She was nonetheless adamant that she would still pass to grade 12 in spite of these challenges. L2, while acknowledging that he was no longer positive of passing this year, uttered, *“yes I am sure I will go to grade 12 next year!”*

L3 complained about the shortage of educators. She indicated that educators seemed overwhelmed by the amount of work they had to do. In some weeks, teachers would fail to attend to them in one of the two days that they had to come to school. *“sometimes teachers don’t come to class saying they are invigilating Grade 12 preparatory examinations.”* Notwithstanding these drawbacks, L3 remained optimistic

that she would be promoted to grade 12 the following year. Her optimism further underlined the increasing need for parental involvement in the new normal of Covid-19.

Although five out of the six parents that were interviewed remained hopeful that their own children would exceed their expectations in the 2020 academic year, one parent, P1, had reservations about academic excellence during the Covid-19 pandemic. She observed that the school system in the district in general puts lots of emphasis on Grade 12. Lower grades, including Grade 11, were largely ignored and left to parents to fill up the gap. According to P1, this *status quo*, though unfair, demanded that parents had to double their involvement in the post Covid-19 era.

The first theme brought to the fore that the optimism exuded by participants towards Grade 11 Geography learners had to be underpinned by increased parental involvement. The Covid-19 pandemic had taken away valuable contact time from educators, placing greater responsibility on the parents. Parents were now more than ever expected to feature prominently at all levels of the typology of Epstein (1997) on parental involvement to ensure that their progressed children would not underperform.

#### 4.2.5.2 Perceptions on progressed learners

The next theme that came out of the interviews pertained to participants' personal reactions when learners fail to achieve minimum promotional requirements. This theme came up strongly among parents and the progressed learners. Educators did not show greater emotional responsibility for learners who ended up being progressed. This indifference by teachers was captured by P who observed that:

*"teachers take glory from learners who are naturally clever or brilliant. They don't focus on learners who are struggling. I personally think that success is determined by changing a learner who is struggling."*

L2 revealed that in as much as he felt devastated by the results, he nonetheless embraced the results as a product of his personal weaknesses and poor study habits. L2 attributed the failure to the excessive and uncontrolled time on television and social media platforms. This excessive use of social media platforms is a domain that E1 felt resides on the doorstep of the parent. It is the first role that parents have to fulfil under the theoretical framework as outlined in the typology of Epstein et al (1997). This first

task relates to parents performing their parenting role that includes the creation of a conducive learning environment. Part of parenting is also determined by the parenting style that parents consciously or subconsciously adopt. According to Spera (2005:134), parenting can take one of the three forms, namely an authoritative, authoritarian or permissive style. Depending on the type of style that parents may choose to adopt, E1 felt educators could do very little to remedy this situation if parents failed to take full responsibility in their parenting roles. This view by E1 is also corroborated by some researchers, in particular Morolong and Naong (2011), who stress that educators cannot control what happens in the home environment.

L1, a progressed learner, revealed that once she learnt that she had been progressed she almost went into depression and her parents had to transfer her from her previous school to avoid ridicule from other learners. L4 felt that progression was indicative of his personal life, he expressed that he experienced difficult times at home saying, *"I am not like other kids. I have learnt to stand on my own from a young age."* Being the first born, his neglectful parents had delegated their parenting roles to him. He argued that, *"My parents are not good parents."* Such a situation was also highlighted by Dorfman and Jacobs (2015) when discussing the concept of parentification, or role reversal as being a setback towards parental involvement.

P5 acknowledged that she was not shocked by the results of progression. She said, *"my child understands first time but does not know how to study."* While the parent was clear on what caused L3 to fail, she, however, exonerated herself from any responsibility and stressed that, *"L3 must teach himself how to study!"* This sense of indifference pointed to the Dunning-Kruger syndrome where those ignorant of personal responsibility are in fact unaware of that ignorance. According to the theoretical framework, assisting with homework is the fourth level on the typology of Epstein et al (1997) on parental involvement. P5 showed that she was ignorant of what constitutes this level of involvement. This absence of a sense of responsibility was also highlighted by Enemuo and Obidike (2013) who observed that parents sometimes are unaware of their own roles in their children's education.

Parents always expect positive results from their children even when they put very little into the academic wellbeing of their children. P2 expressed disappointment at her child's failure to meet minimum promotional requirements. However, by her own

admission, she had not sufficiently influenced her child to perform better. She indicated, *“I don’t have enough time to assist my child at home.”* This level four of the theoretical framework was glaringly absent among these two parents. This sense of nonchalance was bemoaned by another parent, P3. P3 responded, *“bantu wamunyama (black people) we have lots of expectations from our children but we don’t bother to find out what they go through in their education.”* The same observation was captured by Lemmer (2009) who recorded a parent who said she did not have time to assist her child but was willing to outsource her parenting role and pay the subcontractor.

This theme revealed that, in spite of the fact that parents consciously or subconsciously fail to get fully involved in their children education, they still develop a sense of disappointment when positive results prove elusive. This state of wanting to reap where one did not sow further reinforced the need for more parental involvement in their children’s education. The findings of this theme were largely consistent with findings from others research studies, in particular that of Lemmer (2009), Enemu and Obidike (2013) and Dorfman (2015). It will, however, be of greater interest to find out why parental involvement tends to be excessive and yet largely unwelcome by coaches in sport as reported by Surujlal, Dhurup and Sooful (2008). This is in sharp contrast to the lack of it in the academic performance of learners, and yet educators demand that it is largely necessary.

#### 4.2.5.3 Why learners end up being progressed

The third theme that came out of the interviews dwelt on the possible reasons that might have contributed to learners failing to gain automatic promotion to grade 11 and ending up being progressed. The questions that were forwarded to participants tried to elicit their personal views on the significance of parental involvement in particular. The researcher anticipated that, once parental involvement had been identified as a possible missing factor, then participants would also suggest possible solutions on how to strengthen this important ingredient.

E1 compared the teaching-learning process to a three-legged pot. E1 reckoned that, for effective learning to take place, teachers, parents and the learner must stand together for effective learning to take place. E1 pointed out, *“Teaching and learning is like a three legged pot. Just like a three-legged pot relies on all the three legs to stand*



*on the stove, so does learning to be effective.*" All three stakeholders need to offer support to the learning process. E2, while acknowledging that teachers carry the bulk of the burden, felt it was grossly unfair to ask teachers alone to be accountable for the poor performance among Geography learners. He argued that, once a teacher is able to provide evidence that work was done at school, it would then become unreasonable to ask the teacher to be accountable for what learners do or fail to do while at home. E2 believed that some learners adopt "*an out of sight out of mind syndrome once outside the school premises.*" Such learners work only in the presence of the teacher. E2 strongly believed that "*parents must be involved and made accountable for poor results by their children.*" He could, however, not elaborate on how this could be achieved since parents had no such contractual obligations with the department but were actually supposed to be recipients of quality service delivery from DBE.

The frustrations and expectations by E2 were also phenomena that were noted by Lemmer (2009) when he recorded some teachers who complained that parents drive expensive cars while they, the poor ones, are expected to take responsibility for their children's poor academic performance.

E3 believed that underperformance of learners should be placed squarely on the doorstep of learner. E3 felt dejected when explaining that some learners in economic Geography lacked basic general knowledge and awareness of things happening around them. According to E3, such ignorance could not be attributed to the efforts or lack of it on the part of the teacher. This point raised by E3 helps to underscore that parental involvement should be emphasised but should not overshadow the focus on the learners themselves.

E3's reasons for learner underperformance were mutually shared by one of her learners who admitted that poor performance could only be traced to his own shortcomings. The learner, L4, said that, "*the teachers were outstanding and I have myself only to blame.*" The learner, however, conceded that his parents do not attend meetings at the school. L4 nonetheless expressed ignorance on the reasons for their perpetual absence from parent meetings. Despite the lack of support from parents, the learner expressed willingness and welcomed the support of the parents should they decide to visit the school and offer support. This idea of learners embracing parental involvement is in sharp contrast to the views of learners interviewed by Singh

and Mbokodi (2011). These learners expressed embarrassment when their parents visited the school and opted to rent a perceived well-placed parent to avoid ridicule from other learners.

L6 expressed mixed feelings on how conducive the home environment affected her learning. According to L6, their home was next to a tavern that hosted frequent parties. L6 complained that the noise that emanated from the tavern was detrimental and disruptive to her studies. In some cases, she would be forced to relocate to the public library where a conducive environment would be obtained. However, in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic had led to the closure of these public facilities making it even more difficult to study. Although there might be other options for parents to intervene so as to provide a more conducive learning environment, such options would require significant financial input and are largely unsustainable for many parents. This failure to provide a conducive learning environment is the first level of parental involvement on the framework by Epstein et al (1997).

The challenges posed by the home environment were also highlighted by L3 who hinted that there were many children in her household. The many children meant that there was always competition for space and resources in the home. L3 said, “*some want to watch television, others are fighting and sometimes someone is washing dishes.*” All these are issues that fall under the jurisdiction of parents and are sometimes beyond the control of the same parents.

One of the parents, P4, concurred with educators who did not believe educators should not shoulder any responsibilities when learners fail to meet minimum expectations. P4 was emphatic when she said, “*Blame the learner!*”. She also felt that parents do their children a disservice when they allow their children to be progressed after failing to meet minimum promotional requirements. She strongly believed that, by encouraging progression, it was tantamount to preparing learners to fail. P4 added that parents who allow their children to be progressed and later fail to attend meetings were in effect delegating their children’s future to other people. This view was also highlighted by Ofole (2017) who noted that progressed learners are more susceptible to societal ills compared to learners who gain automatic promotion to the next grade. This characteristic feature among progressed learners was noted to have already

started to manifest itself among progressed learners taught by E2. Their level of absenteeism was already on an upward trajectory.

One of the reasons that was put forward for progression was the attitude of today's teenagers in general. P2 retorted, *"teenagers think they know everything"*. This indifference to life on the part of the learners, according to the parent, was being worsened by the 'Human rights'. The parent exclaimed, *"I blame human rights! The children cannot be told what to do anymore"*. The parent also commented that some teachers were now adopting a nonchalant approach. *"the teachers say as long as I am doing my job and getting my salary, let them enjoy their rights"*. Once teachers adopt this *laissez faire* attitude towards teaching, then parents are expected to step up to fill the gap caused by indiscipline by learners. Segalo and Rambuda (2018) also observed the same phenomenon and reported that, in some instances, educators developed a sense of hopelessness and defencelessness even when provoked by learners. This disciplinary vacuum created by the enforcement of basic human rights required that parents had to be more involved in their personal capacities as well as working together in various community structures. Community involvement is level six on parental involvement according to the framework by Epstein et al (1997).

The views by P2 were not shared by P5. While noting the limitations that parents and teachers have in the teaching learning process, P5 added, *"teenagers go through a lot. They have their own secret lives. Black people especially turn a blind eye to their struggles"*. P5 argued that sometimes parents think the schools are in control and the schools also think the parents are in control. Such perceived duplication of duties leaves the learner at the mercy of peer influence when ultimately neither party takes responsibility. The parent then recommended a coordinated approach between the teachers and the parents to achieve better academic performance among learners. This recommendation subscribes to the four levels of parent-teacher partnerships as identified by Lemmer (2013). All the four levels require a coordinated approach between teachers and parents. The appeal for a coordinated approach is part of level 2 on the framework developed by Epstein et al (1997). According to the typology on the framework, parental involvement on level 2 requires that parents communicate with the school and teachers. Regular communication makes the parents aware of what is expected of them at all times.

#### 4.2.5.4 Communication as a cause for non-attendance at school meetings

School organised meetings are viewed by both parents and teachers as the most convenient way to get parents involved in their children's education. Parents meetings offer parents a platform to make decisions concerning the academic wellbeing of their children. Decision making forms the third level of parental involvement on the framework by Epstein et al (1997). If parents cannot attend these meetings, then they are also unable to make decisions concerning their children's education. This leaves only educators to be the sole decision makers irrespective of whether such decisions are progressive or not. Teachers were unanimous that the attendance by parents at these meetings is always disappointing. The parents of learners doing science subjects, including Geography, were identified as the same parents whose attendance is encouraging. Coincidentally these are the same learners who exhibit intrinsic interests in their education. However, parents whose children were doing general subjects from which a large pool of progressed Geography learners emanated had a rather below average attendance.

E1 indicated that their school has in excess of 860 learners, yet, during a typical parents meeting, fewer than 100 parents attended. Although the teacher could not estimate the average number of children one parent has at the school, he remained adamant that the attendance was well below expectation. The teacher attributed the non-attendance by parents to two possible reasons.

The first reason for non-attendance was identified as nothing more than simply a lack of interest on the part of the parents. The second possible reason was attributed to work commitments on the part of the parents. The teacher noted, *"at our school we normally have meetings between two and three in the afternoon. This may be a problem to parents who go to work."* This view was supported by E3 who speculated that most parents at his school were female single parents. E3 felt calling for meetings during the afternoon lead to serious challenges to the single parents. *"If they absent themselves from work in order to attend the meetings, some companies implement the no work no pay rule. This will adversely affect the monthly income of those families."* To get around this problem, E3 observed that, *"some parents send delegates to the meetings in their place. Such delegates are usually not fully involved or concerned."*

Four learner participants felt it was encouraging to see their parents coming to school meetings. Only one learner, L2 admitted his parents never attend parents' meetings. The learner reported that he had an absent father and could, therefore, not reach out to him to attend should her mother fail to attend. Another learner (L5) reported that his personal relationship with his parents was lukewarm. The parent-child relationship was hostile such that parents were excluded from the academic life of their own child. This state of affairs was highlighted by Lemmer (2009:89) by stating that dysfunctional families are a threat to parental involvement. When a family becomes dysfunctional as a result of parents' failure to guide their own children, then, as per the framework by Epstein et al (1997), the parents would have failed in their parenting obligations.

It was also noted that some learners were not very truthful with regards to their parents' attendance at parents' meetings. L1 indicated that her parents always attended these meetings. However, when the parent was asked the same question, a different answer was obtained. P1, the parent, when first asked about her attendance first chuckled and then stated emphatically, *"no I don't attend the parents' meetings!"*. When probed for possible reasons for such non-attendance, P1 had this to say, *"teachers sometimes just like attention yabazali (parents). Teachers sometimes just call these meetings to get attention from parents."* P1 added that teachers more often than not call parents to schools for very trivial matters. As a result of these issues P1 had lost the motivation to continue attending the meeting. *"You don't even know why you were there in the first place. I am being honest,"* she added.

The conclusion drawn from P1 reflections suggests that the onus is on the school to come up with an agenda that is appealing to parents. This agenda may need to have parental input otherwise some parents may feel they are being taken for granted. The sentiments echoed by P1 are corroborated by the research findings of Morolong and Naong (2011) who suggest that for an improved parental involvement initiative to manifest, it required a substantial change in attitude on the part of the teachers. Morolong and Naong (2011) also noted that the schools themselves also pose a barrier to meaningful parental involvement.

The sentiments by P1 were mutually shared by two other parents. P4 retorted, *"teachers don't engage. They dictate to us. The meetings are not about finding solutions but blaming parents."* P4 also added, *"if the purpose is to find solutions then*

the meetings are worthwhile.” P5 bemoaned the lack of respect that teachers portray. “*Bayadelela abomistress, especially thina esibukela ngathi sibancane, bayasidelela groot hayi kancane.* (these young female teachers are very rude to parents especially those of us whose physical appearance resembles that of a young girl. They are extremely disrespectful.) The parent added, “*siyanyatswa as singabazali.* (we are taken for granted as parents)”. These ill feelings towards teachers is one of the major reasons why parents end up abandoning their parenting duties at schools. They then fail to contribute to decision making affecting the education of their children.

It is, however, necessary to pass a comment on the different views on the perceptions that educators have on possible reasons for non-attendance by parents. E3, a teacher from one of the schools, believed that their meetings were always open and allowed for vibrant discussions. “*Our meetings are usually scheduled to last one hour but most of the time they end up stretching up to three hours. This shows that the meetings are democratic and parents are not afraid to ask and question whatever they don’t agree with*”. One possible explanation for the glaring contradictions in perceptions is explained by the Dunning- Kruger Syndrome.

According to Dunning (2011), people are sometimes unaware of their own ignorance. Dunning (2011) observed that people who are ignorant about a phenomenon in their lives are, most of the time, ignorant of that fact. Dunning (2011) labels it Meta-Ignorance or the ignorance of being ignorant. According to Dunning (2011), being ignorant of your own ignorance manifests itself because of a lack of knowledge. It is more often camouflaged by wrong beliefs and misconceptions that are used to justify actions. While misconceptions and misguided knowledge systems may inevitably lead people to make mistakes, it also becomes a stumbling block for them to appreciate their own ignorance. The Dunning Kruger effect will ultimately become an impediment to personal growth. An effort must, therefore, be made to bring the two stakeholders to a common understanding that is not clouded by subjective misconceptions.

This effect was seen to be relevant when exploring the lack of parental involvement in the academic performance of learners. Some parents, out of ignorance, alienate themselves from the education of their progressed learners. They are ignorant that they are ignorant about the available opportunities for them to make significant

contributions to their children's education. They remain entangled in their own ignorance.

On the other hand, teachers and parents harbour misconceptions about one another and the nature of their meetings. On one hand, educators rate themselves highly and believe parents share the same views on the nature of their meetings. Educators believe that parents who don't attend do not attend out of nonchalance on the part of the parent. On the other hand, parents attribute educators' arrogance as a reason for their deliberately boycotting meetings.

It is important for both parties to do self-introspection and allow constructive criticism from either parties so as to promote better parental involvement. Educators have to acknowledge that, perhaps, it is they whose actions may be disagreeable to parents and end up pushing the parents away. If the educators remain ignorant and adamant that they are not responsible for parents' non-attendance at meetings, then the impasse may never be broken. Parents may also need to accept the good intentions of the educators and avoid drawing battle lines to the detriment of the child.

#### 4.2.5.5 Non-involvement of parents outside the scheduled parents' meetings.

This theme was derived from question 5 and 6. The literature review revealed that parental involvement is not limited to SGB participation or attendance at ritualised parents' meetings. Parents are still expected to participate in the daily learning routine of their children both at school and at home. The reasons for parents' non-involvement are manifold.

The first reason was identified as a deliberate act by educators not to involve parents. E1 believed it was not necessary to involve parents. He said, *"when I was a young teacher, I used to invite parents to the school. I was struggling with discipline then. Now I have five years of experience. I now know how to handle my learners."* According to E1, parents are only vital when disciplinary issues are concerned. This line of argument was identified by P1 as a major setback and reason why parents do not come to school as they feel belittled. P1 commented, *"we are only involved when there is trouble."* If educators can embrace parents as stakeholders who can offer support beyond disciplinary issues, then parents may become more eager to be more involved.

The remarks by E1 also seem to suggest that parental involvement should gradually be terminated as teachers become more experienced in their profession. Such an assertion is glaringly missing in the literature that was reviewed and warrants further research to authenticate whether a teacher's experience can be a substitute for parental involvement. It further raises questions about whether the degree of parental involvement is dependent upon the experience of the teacher. It should be also of concern among researchers to investigate and compare the perceptions of young educators and experienced educators with regard to parental involvement.

Another issue that was raised by E2 was ignorance about the awareness of parents on their constitutional rights to petition the School Governing Body (SGB) to be responsive to their demands and expectations. *"Most parents are not aware of their constitutional rights as enshrined in the SASA of 1996. Even most teachers are not aware of this SASA act. I only became aware of it when I was elected on to the SGB."* This observation by E2 raises further questions. If parents and teachers are both oblivious of their respective mandates in so far as parental involvement is concerned, how are they expected to implement the provisions of the same act? The issue of involving parents will become haphazard. Stakeholders in the school governance will adopt reactionary approaches to solving issues. Parents and teachers will, therefore, be expected to familiarise themselves with the SASA of 1996 for any meaningful involvement to take place.

Poor communication was also cited as a factor that limits parental involvement. E2 revealed that some parents are not told, or are unaware, that they will be expected to come to school at regular intervals. The teacher noted that the school relies mostly on written letters to invite parents. These letters are carried home by their own children. Should the children opt not to deliver the letters to the intended recipients, then the parents will remain unaware of any invitation to the school. The teacher suggested that the school should make use of community radio stations like Jozi FM to relay such messages to parents as a way of bypassing the learner as the messenger. The observation by E2 was reinforced by one learner L4 who remarked that, *"if I don't know the reason why my parent is wanted, I feel guilt and won't tell them they are wanted at school."*



It becomes imperative that the letters sent to parents must be unambiguous so as to gain acceptance from the messenger. If the learner messenger feels threatened by the contents of the letter, then logic will dictate that those letters will never reach the intended recipients. Ultimately, the supposed beneficiary of such teacher-parent interface becomes the stumbling block to parental involvement. This will ultimately undermine level 2 on the parental involvement hierarchy as propounded on the framework by Epstein et al (1997).

One other reason cited for non-parental involvement was the negative image that a school may portray to the community. E1 was convinced that the way a school's image is perceived by the parents may act as a stimulus or a stumbling block towards the way parents become involved in their children's education. E1 commented that, *"the way parents look at our reputation discourages them. When they see us being serious they will also become more serious and will become more involved."* The educator then suggested that, if parents are to become more involved, the teaching personnel must first improve the image of the school. The educator felt that having a disciplined and hardworking personnel was a way of improving the image of the school. If the image is not palatable to parents, then their involvement is minimised and progressed learners will be the worst affected.

The existence of a positive school image seems to confirm what Motala and Luxomo (2014) reported when they argued that schools do not always offer equal opportunities for parents to get involved. A negative school image repels parents from the school. They then fail to participate as a community for the improvement of the school. Parent collaboration with the community is the last level of parental involvement on the framework of Epstein et al (1997).

Parents and teachers often have misconceptions about one another. Such misconceptions often become a drawback to fruitful parental involvement. Parents often think that educators do not regard them as academically capable of assisting their children. One parent, P5, revealed that, *"you can see from the way they talk to us that they think we know nothing. We are only involved when there is bad behaviour on the part of the child. That is very belittling."* The parent added that she was even prepared to go onto the internet and search for information just to assist her child. This misconception on the part of teachers was also shared by E1 who remarked that

most parents were not educated and, therefore, he/she would not expect much from them beyond disciplinary issues. Morolong and Naong (2011), nonetheless, had a strategy that advocated for a year plan by the school to allow for more parental involvement beyond just disciplinary issues. Schools in collaboration with parents needed to develop a year plan with a clear outline on what parents needed to do.

#### 4.2.5.6 Volunteering at school activities

Epstein et al (1997) identified volunteering at school related activities as the third level of parental participation. Educators were unsure as to the different ways in which parents could volunteer. The educators seemed unaware of the opportunities that were available for parents to become involved. E3 blamed the Covid-19 pandemic for having limited the opportunities for parents to volunteer in the school's activities. E1 remarked, "parents cannot volunteer much because things like sports and other extra curricula activities are not permitted under Covid-19. Parents could volunteer to be coaches or to participate in acting but it is no longer possible." This remark showed that some educators had limited perceptions of how parents could be utilised in the academic performance of the learners.

On the other hand, parents, though not sure of various spheres in which they could volunteer to function in, expressed willingness to assist if and when called to do so. P2 perceived that, "*you can't just walk into the school and say you are volunteering to do something. The teachers will think that you are expressing a vote of no confidence in what they are doing. You only volunteer if called upon to do.*" This sentiment showed that the level of volunteering was dependent upon how the school or educators were able to extend an invitation to parents to perform whatever duties as determined by the school. Parents had only to react to this invitation.

To a very large extent, parental involvement in the form of volunteering in school activities was greatly limited in the schools under investigation. The absence of volunteering was traced to ignorance on the part of the educators about what aspects parents had to be involved in.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has offered an analysis of the findings from the responses by participants on what causes a lack of parental involvement among the progressed grade 11

geography learners. Eleven questions were posed to parents and another set of 11 questions to the educators of the same progressed learners. Eight questions were put forward to the progressed learners to solicit their responses on what could be the causes of a lack of parental involvement on the sample group. Respective themes were then identified from the responses. Challenges associated with parental involvement and the recommendations were also provided. An attempt was also made to link the responses and themes to the existing literature on parental involvement. It was discovered that respondents' views were largely consistent with the available literature.

Participants were asked whether they were optimistic that progressed learners had the capability to excel in their grade 11 academic year. This question led to the first theme that established that all stakeholders were unanimous and had hope that, despite the progressed status of the learners and the Covid-19 environment, the learners still had the capability to perform even better in grade 11. It was established that parents still expected their children to do better irrespective of whether they become involved or not in their children's education. This optimism, however, according to educators, had to be underpinned by improved cooperation among all the three stakeholders.

The second objective was to establish whether, after the progressed outcome of learners in grade 10, they exhibited any sense of disappointment, satisfaction or showed an indifferent approach. The theme that emanated from this question showed that all the stakeholders felt disappointed and all acknowledged that they could have done better. This theme also helped to single out parental involvement as a factor that, if reinforced, can help turn around average performance to above average performance.

The third objective of the questions that were posed explored the reasons why parents sometimes do not attend parents' meetings that are organised by the school. This question helped to identify reasons, such as the arrogance on the part of teachers, poor communication and parent work-related commitments among issues as some of the reasons why parents fail to attend meetings. This theme also showed that non-attendance is sometimes deliberate and done as an act of passive resistance or a silent protest against the unfair treatment that parents get from the schools.

The fourth set of questions tried to persuade participants to share their views on whether parental involvement can indeed help to change the performance of learners. Although the parents and the teachers were in agreement and shared the same perception that parental involvement was crucial in the academic performance of learners, glaring contradictions on the actual roles that parents are expected to do emerged. Teachers downplayed and limited the role of parents to disciplinary issues while parents felt they could offer more beyond just learner discipline. In fact, some parents felt belittled by educators who involved them on matters of discipline only.

Lastly, participants were required to make an evaluation of parental involvement beyond parents' meetings. It was evident from the respondents that the schools themselves sometimes acted as barriers to meaningful parental involvement so putting progressed learners at higher risk of failing. Some teachers had misconceptions that parents were illiterate and, therefore, could offer very little towards the academic achievement of the learners. This belief system made the same teachers subconsciously close the door on parents' possible involvement in their children's education. Work commitments were also given as reasons for a limited amount of parental involvement.

Participants were also requested to make recommendations for an improved parental involvement input into the education of their children. Parents hinted that a change in the educators' attitudes towards them was a prerequisite condition for improved parental involvement in the schools under this study. Better communication channels between the educators and the parents were also cited as a requirement for improved parental involvement. Educators also called for a rigorous awareness campaign to make parents conscious of how valuable they are in the education of their children.

The next, and last, chapter will offer a summary of the whole research project. It will highlight the aims and objectives of the study. The main research question will also be highlighted. Major issues from the literature review as well as the methods of data collection used in the study will be summarized. The major findings of the study will also be summarised.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented the findings from the participants' point of view in respect of their perceptions on the causes of the lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 Geography learners. The analysis followed the explication process. The findings were analysed against the theoretical framework presented by Epstein et al (1997).

This chapter now presents a summary of this research endeavour and also offers conclusions with regards to the main research question. Recommendations that relate to how parents can become more involved to assist in improving the academic performance especially among progressed learners will be made.

### **5.2 SUMMARY**

This section offers a comprehensive summary of the background to the study, the rationale for having embarked on the study as well as highlighting the research problem and the research questions. The overall conceptual framework, research approach and the design will also be summarised. The summary will also offer a synopsis of the theoretical framework propounded by Epstein et al (1997). Key issues arising from the literature review will be summarised as well as an indication of the methodology that was used during the data gathering and analysis stage.

Parental involvement has already received universal endorsement as an important factor that assists in learners' academic achievement. The Department of Education in South Africa now allows for learners who ordinarily would have failed to meet minimum promotional requirements to be progressed to the next grade. The learners who get to the next grade without merit require support from their parents in order for them not ending up becoming frustrated by the high demands of the next grade.

The schools used in this investigation experienced a high volume of progressed grade 11 Geography learners during the 2019 academic year. When a large number of learners are progressed to the next grade, the literature has shown that it can trigger other disciplinary challenges if left unchecked. It is, therefore, necessary to examine ways that can help the progressed learners cope with the demands of the new grade.

Involving parents is one way that can assist in improving the performance of these progressed learners.

A pilot research study was conducted to determine whether the progressed learners had received parental support in the previous years. It was established that many progressed learners had not received adequate parental support. This led to the formulation of the statement of the problem. The problem that needed to be investigated was to understand the causes of lack of parental involvement among the progressed grade 11 geography learners.

It is from this research problem that the main research question was derived. The researcher had to answer the question: what causes a lack of parental involvement among the progressed grade 11 geography learners? In order to assist in answering this main question three sub-questions had to be answered. These were:

1. What is the role of parents in the academic performance of the progressed grade 11 Geography learners?
2. What form of parental involvement do teachers expect from the parents of the progressed learners?
3. What are the possible causes for non-involvement by the parents of the progressed learners?

These questions were central in understanding the aim of the research of investigating the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed learners. They were also critical in unearthing possible solutions to challenges faced by schools that end up having a large pool of disoriented progressed learners.

The interpretivist paradigm was chosen as the overall conceptual framework. Phenomenology was adopted as the research design. This research relied on the use of interviews to enable participants to contribute and identify the possible causes of lack of involvement from their point of view. Interviews allowed participants to say whatever they wanted without having a feeling of being compelled to give answers that followed a predetermined narrative as is the case with structured questionnaire questions.

In this investigation, the researcher had to provide concrete results about what was causing a lack of parental involvement among the progressed grade 11 Geography

learners. To arrive at certainty, it was important that a phenomenological research design had to be used. The affected parents, teachers and the learners had to give their own personal opinions. Once participants had revealed what was causing a lack of parental involvement, it would then be easy to develop home-grown solutions for the schools under investigation.

The literature review identified Epstein et al (1997) as being among the leaders in research that focuses on parental involvement in schools. The comprehensive framework for school, family and community partnership by Epstein et al (1997) was adopted as the theoretical framework that guided this research. According to the typology on the framework by Epstein et al (1997), parental involvement needs to be examined from six levels. The first level of involvement encompasses basic parenting. According to this level, when parents perform their parenting duties by paying school fees, buying stationery, offering emotional and psychological support that makes their children concentrate on education, that is part of parenting. The establishment of a conducive home environment that allows for peaceful learning also constitutes basic parenting.

When analysing the causes of lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners, it was necessary to evaluate the causes of the lack of parenting as the first level of parental involvement. It was necessary to determine the causes that lead parents to neglect their parenting obligations thereby exposing their children to the dictates of peer influence.

The second level of parental involvement on the theoretical framework involves basic communication with the school and the teachers. According to the typology, parents are expected to communicate with the school regularly to establish areas with which they need to assist the school. Communication can either be from the school to parents or from parents to the school. When communication channels are blocked, then parents cannot effectively and gainfully be involved in their children's education.

In this research study, the causes of lack of communication also helped to answer the main research question relative to what causes a lack of parental involvement among the progressed learners. The parents, teachers and learners all gave insights on the possible cause of lack of communication between the school and the parents.

The third level on the theoretical framework related to volunteering. According to the typology, parents are expected to volunteer in school activities. Volunteering signifies a greater degree of interest on the part of the parents. Volunteering can take different forms, from assisting in cleaning the school, assisting in disciplinary matters and even extra curriculum activities.

When parents fail to volunteer, this puts an extra burden on the educators. It was, therefore, necessary to investigate why parents of the progressed learners were not volunteering to be involved in the school organised activities.

Parents are also expected to become involved when learners are learning at home. According to this theoretical framework parents need to become involved when learners are at home doing homework. Parents may get involved directly with subject content matter or by monitoring and supervising study. Parents are also expected to motivate their children so that homework is completed.

When parents fail to assist in subject content matter owing their own limited content mastery, they are not expected to neglect their supervisory role. When parents become uninterested in monitoring learning at home, the progressed learners become vulnerable to social media platforms to the detriment of their academic success. The research study had to establish why parents become unconcerned about their children's education when learning at home.

SASA of 1996 established opportunities for parents to be involved in decision making at the school governing level. This was done by creating seats for parents on the SGB. Parents are also expected to contribute in decision making during parents' meetings. Decision making is yet other level of parental involvement on the typology of Epstein et al (1997)

The last level of parental involvement on the theoretical framework involves collaborating with the community. Parents are expected work as a unit in communities to help their learners cope with societal challenges. The community can either provide a micro environment that is hostile to learning or one that allows young people to attain their full learning potential. The creation of a conducive learning environment is a collective effort by all members of the community.



When some parents develop a lukewarm attitude towards the creation of this conducive micro climate, it becomes necessary to investigate why the same parents drag their feet when it comes to collaborating with the community.

### **5.2.1 Lessons from The Review of Literature**

The term parental involvement has attracted enormous attention and has been used to mean different things by different scholars. The literature has shown that, generally, scholars use the terms parental involvement and parental participation interchangeably. The term parental involvement is used to mean a devotion of resources, either financial or material, by parents as defined by SASA of 1996 into their children's education. Parental involvement also refers to devotion of time and emotional support in the child's education.

The typology of Epstein et al (1997) captures the different ways in which parents can be involved in their children's education. Parental involvement, according to the typology, can manifest itself in six levels, namely parenting, communication, volunteering, learning from home, decision making and collaborating with the community.

Progressed learners are learners who ordinarily would have failed to meet the minimum promotional requirements to be promoted to the next grade and be allowed to proceed to the next grade subject to meeting the progression. These learners go into the next grade without the required threshold background needed for the next grade.

Despite the existence of distant voices that question the relevance of parental involvement, there is nonetheless abundant evidence that shows that parental involvement is a valuable ingredient in learners' academic performance. Literature also shows that parental involvement has more rewarding outcomes especially among parents of a low socio-economic status.

Despite the fact that it is no longer a disputable fact that parental involvement is highly necessary in the academic performance among learners, it remains glaringly absent especially among the poor performing learners from families among the low socio-economic groups. Researcher have given some possible reasons for the absence of parental involvement among individuals where it is most needed.

A lack of communication emerged as one of the chief reasons why parents fail to get involved. When parents are not made aware of what is expected of them it becomes a challenge for them to get involved. This is also compounded by lack of clear government policies on how parents need to be involved. It leaves parental involvement strategies at the discretion of the educator.

The existence of dysfunctional families has been cited as one impediment to achieving parental involvement. Dysfunctional families may lead to family members becoming hostile to one another. In some cases, it was reported that children will end up not being keen to be assisted by their parents and developing a sense of annoyance when their parents try to get involved in their school work. In some extreme cases some children end up abusing their parents both physically and emotionally. Physical abuse in the form of beating the parent makes it almost impossible for the parent to get involved in the child's academic life.

Parentification was also identified as another phenomenon that limits parental involvement. This is a situation that develops when there is role reversal where the child takes over the role of being a parent and the parent resorts to the role of being the child. Parents going through divorce and other emotional challenges are known to surrender their parenting obligations leaving their children to offer them the emotional support. When the child starts to parent the parent, then parental involvement becomes a distant reality.

A parent's level of competency has also been identified as a factor affecting effective parental involvement. Competent parents are those parents who feel confident that they can make significant contributions in their children's education. This is not related to the parent's level of education. Incompetent parents, on the other hand, are parents who doubt their own capacity to make significant contributions in their children's education. Incompetent parents often expect others to take their place with regard to their parenting obligations. Parents who have a sense of incompetence are less likely to get involved in their children's education. This sense of incompetence is further complicated by the observation from literature that shows that parental involvement naturally declines as children get older. It will then require some coaching on parenting to get the parents to develop a sense of competence.

Apart from family dynamics that limit parental involvement, other factors, mainly from the schools themselves, have been identified as causes for parental non-participation in their children's education.

Schools have been reported as showing some degree of intolerance towards parents as they try to become actively involved in their children's education. Some principals were reported as showing high levels of disrespect towards parents. The principals have been reported as seeing parents as an unnecessary distraction. When the school displays that degree of prejudice towards parents, it will then have a deterrent effect on parental involvement,

Some educators were convinced that, since some parents were not as educated as they were, they could assist very little in the academic performance of their children. Educators displayed a great deal of ignorance in what parents could bring to the table in the academic performance of their children. That ignorance led the educators to side-line the parents consciously in the academic wellbeing of their children.

In spite of the fact that educators underestimated the role of parents in the academic performance of learners, they welcomed parental involvement on disciplinary related issues. With corporal punishment having been outlawed, educators were developing a sense of helplessness when encountering deviant behaviour among learners. The educators' hope to achieve discipline was now firmly placed at the doorstep of the parent.

### **5.2.2 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

A sample of six progressed learners was purposively drawn from a pool of progressed grade 11 geography learners. six parents of the same learners from whom involvement was expected were added to the list of participants. One geography educator from each of the three participating schools completed the list of participants. In total data was collected from 15 participants.

The research approach was exclusively qualitative in nature. A phenomenological design was adopted which necessitated the use of semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. The interviews were all contacted via video calls in line with the recommendations for Covid-19 social distancing protocols. All the interviews were conducted after obtaining informed consent from the participants.

Data analysis was done following the explication process. This process proceeded in five stages. The first stage related to the researcher's systematically bracketing himself to limit the chances of having his personal views finding their way into the findings. The second stage required that units of meanings were delineated from the recordings. The third stage involved clustering of the units to form themes. This was then followed by making a summary of each individual interview. Lastly, the explication process was concluded by extracting general and unique themes and then making a composite summary. The findings were then corroborated with the existing literature and conclusions drawn.

### **5.3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Conclusions were drawn in line with the themes that came from the interviews. These themes related to whether participants felt that there was any justification for investing time, finance or even emotional support in the progressed learners. Conclusions were also drawn in respect of reasons why the learners had ended up being progressed and why parents do not always attend the scheduled parents' meetings. Lastly, conclusions were drawn on how the findings fitted into the theories.

#### **5.3.1 Optimism with regards to Progressed Learners**

Parents and their children remained optimistic that, despite being progressed, learners could still do better. The learners remained hopeful that they would be promoted to the next grade. This sense of optimism was in spite of the fact that they were now required to go to school fewer days than before owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Educators were cautiously optimistic. They welcomed the introduction of smaller classes and the curriculum that had been trimmed in response to the fewer contact days. Educators were also worried that some learners had stopped coming to school on a regular basis.

The conclusions from this optimism is that, despite all challenges, parents are always hopeful that their children would eventually do well. Parents sometimes are oblivious of the fact that, when learners fail, they too would have failed. More often than not parents take a back seat in parental involvement and want to reap where they did not sow. It requires some awareness programmes to bring the parents to an

understanding that any optimism should be reinforced by deliberate and intentional goal-oriented participation on their part.

### **5.3.2 Reasons for Learners failing to meet Minimum Promotional Requirements**

Learners felt devastated when they were progressed. This indicates that all learners have a natural desire to do well at school. Learners, irrespective of the effort that they put in or the help that they get from their parents, still harbour some hope to succeed.

Learners cited the excessive use of social media platforms both at school and at home as the major cause of them failing to meet minimum promotional requirements. This problem required that educators at school and parents at home devise strategies to ensure that resources, such as Smart phones and Wi-Fi, would not become an impediment towards learners' academic achievement. If access to these drivers of the fourth industrial revolution were left unchecked, then the progressed learners would not benefit from the same resources.

One learner reported that he had learnt to stand on his own. This was a reflection of parents having abandoned their parenting obligations. When parents leave their children to determine their own destiny, then the prospects of the progressed learners turning failure into success become a very distant reality. This is even compounded by the fact that some parents fail to provide a conducive learning environment at home.

Some parents revealed that they could identify the weaknesses in the study habits of their children but could not do anything about it. The same parents somehow expected their children to pull out of the entanglement on their own. Some learning challenges require that parents seek professional help to understand and rectify the learning barriers in their children. To identify the learning barriers requires greater communication between the school and the parents. Even when the source of handicap had been identified some parents still lacked the financial resources to seek professional help. Ultimately, the progressed learners would remain at risk of failing the next grade.

Basic human rights also featured strongly as a cause of learners being progressed. Some parents did not welcome the abolition of corporal punishment in schools and at home as a means of achieving discipline among learners. The parents argued that

the children are now enjoying too many rights to the detriment of their education. The parents argued that the learners are now showing no respect for their learning obligations. Dejected parents were concerned that a gloomy future would judge the learners harshly.

It would appear that the abolition of corporal punishment as a form of achieving discipline was not followed by awareness programmes on alternative methods of achieving discipline. Both parents and teachers continue to lament the abolition of corporal punishment and are at loss as to how to control the young adults. Parents seem to develop a sense of hopelessness when faced with disciplinary issues. Educators, on the other hand, look to the same parents when learners misbehave.

Parents have also been identified as the weakest link in the tripartite learning arrangement that includes educators and the learners. Educators were unanimous that, if parents cannot be involved, then academic performance will become very difficult in relation to the progressed learners. Teachers reported that most learners do work only in the presence of the educator as there was no monitoring at home.

The non-involvement by parents can also be traced to deliberate actions by some educators to exclude the parents from the teaching-learning process of their children. One of the educators reported that he did not see the need to involve parents as he was now an experienced teacher. The educator argued that with the experience he had gained, he no longer required the help of parents even when dealing with disciplinary issues. When educators feel they are in absolute control, then parents may find it difficult to bulldoze their way into participation in the academic wellbeing of their children's education.

Educators indicated that parents of the progressed learners hardly ever attended the parents' meeting. Two major reasons for this non-attendance were cited by educators. Firstly, educators believed that some parents simply lacked concern about their children' education. Secondly educators believed that some parents' level of involvement was limited owing to work commitments. Educators felt that the no work no pay policy that was adopted by many companies had a deterrent effect on parents' ability to attend parents' meetings.

The failure to attend parents' meetings could also be traced to the attitudes of the messenger. Schools under the investigation relied on the learners to deliver meeting

invites to parents. If learners felt the meetings were to discuss their bad behaviour, some of the learners would then deliberately sabotage the process by not delivering the messages to the intended recipients.

Contrary to educators' views, some parents believed that the parents' meetings were useless and did not warrant their consideration. The parents felt that the meetings were just an attention seeking exercise, were not constructive and were called to blame parents for the problems being experienced in the schools. Parents felt that they were not respected by educators who dictated issues to them.

The conclusion drawn from these two contrasting views is that parents and educators hardly share mutual visions about how parents must be engaged. It is the schools themselves that must make parents more comfortable and respected at school. Schools themselves have the potential to shut the door to parental involvement or open the doors for cooperation and even volunteering.

### **5.3.3 Alignment of Findings with the Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that was propounded by Epstein et al (1997) has six ways in which parents can get involved in their children's education.

The first level on the framework relates to parenting. The findings established that some parents of the progressed learners were failing in their parenting obligations. Children were having unlimited access to social media platforms thereby neglecting their school work. Parents put the blame for their failure to control their own children on the human rights that the children now enjoyed. They also felt that the withdrawal of corporal punishment had caused irreparable damage to their parenting obligations.

Financial constraints also appeared to be a contributing factor in parents' failure to deliver on their parenting role. One parents revealed that she knows exactly where her children struggle in her academic studies. However, the learning barrier that caused the child to be progressed required professional help which she could not afford. In this instance the child may end up failing again to meet the minimum promotional requirements not because the parent is ignorant of what needs to be done but because of financial incapacitation.

The next level relates to the ability of parents to communicate with the school. Parents who participated in this investigation revealed that communication with the school was

always one way, from the school to the parents. Even that one-way communication channel was not always smooth sailing. Parents were not always able to communicate with the school because the lines of communication were sometimes blocked with impediments. Poor communication channels proved to be a hindrance to parents as they tried to fulfil their involvement role in communication as per the second order of the theoretical framework.

One of the causes of lack of parental involvement in the form of communication was cited as the lack of clear plans of action by the school. Parents believed that schools must issue them with termly plans indicating how they were expected to get involved. Teachers were also expected to inform parents on the homework that their children had to undertake and the kind of support they expected from the parents. In the absence of such plans, communication with the school becomes haphazard and sometimes counterproductive.

Learners themselves have also proved to be an obstacle in the communication network. Schools under the investigation used learners to deliver the correspondence from the school to the parents. Some learners tended not to convey the message if they felt threatened by the contents of the letters. The intended recipients of the messages sometimes ended up not even knowing what was expected of them.

When parents fail in their parenting duties, the family may degenerate into a dysfunctional family characterised by hostility among family members. Once hostility becomes a permanent feature in a family, communication with the school becomes no more than an ideal.

Volunteering at school's organised functions and duties is another form of parental involvement on the framework. Volunteering at school was blatantly absent among the parents of the progressed learners. The parents felt it was the responsibility of the schools to invite them to the school if they needed them to participate in certain functions. Parents felt volunteering was tantamount to expressing a vote of no confidence on the school.

The fourth aspect on the theoretical framework entails learning from home. Parents are expected to assist with work at home or organise extra lessons for their struggling children. Educators believed that most parents were poorly educated and, therefore, could not assist much when it came to homework. This is contrary to the views of the



parents who felt they could do whatever it takes to assist their children. The parents demanded only that they be informed about what needed to be done. Some parents indicated that they were even prepared to go to the library to learn new information for the benefit of their children.

Decision making is yet another form of parental participation. SASA of 1996 allows for parents to occupy positions on the SGB and make decisions that govern the school. None of the parents who participated in the research expressed any willingness to be part of the decision-making body for the school. A number of parents indicated they never attended those meeting labelling them a mere waste of time. Parents expressed a vote of no confidence in the way the meetings were conducted. They viewed the meetings as not being goal orientated.

The last level on the theoretical framework is collaborating with the community. The creation of a conducive macro environment that is devoid of drug abuse, crime and other societal ills is the responsibility of all community members. Parents who participated in the investigation revealed that there were no such initiatives from community leaders to involve everyone in community forums to create a conducive learning environment for the children in the community. Work commitments were also cited as a factor that made it impossible for the parents to participate in community initiatives to help the learners.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations emanating from this study will be two-fold. The first recommendations relate to how the participating school can encourage parents to be more involved in their children's education following the typology of Epstein et al (1997). These recommendations were made after drawing conclusions on what was causing parents to be less involved in their children' education. The next section of the recommendations relates to related research on the same topic on parental involvement.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations to Improve Parental Involvement**

These recommendations were made following the order of the typology of Epstein et al (1997).

#### **Parenting**

Schools are expected to take a leading role in devising strategies of instilling discipline among learners that conforms to the current human rights norms. Schools will be encouraged to share such strategies with parents of progressed, sometimes problematic, learners to help the parents in their parenting obligations. Most of the parents fail to embrace the basic rights and view the same rights as an infringement of their own rights in being responsible parents. The parents appear confused and external organisations, including the schools, must take the initiative to educate parents on parenting methods under the acceptable basic human rights.

Schools also need to help parents locate the various opportunities provided for by the Department of Basic education and other non-governmental organisations that assist parents who have financial challenges to engage the services of educational experts. Schools should develop a data base of such expert professionals such that those learners with serious learning barriers can get help. If such information is not made available to parents, they develop a sense of hopelessness and failure in their parenting duties.

### **Communication**

Schools are encouraged to use alternative methods of communication and not to rely on the learner as the only vehicle to relay messages to and from the home. Community radio stations, like Jozi FM, and local newspapers, like the Chiawelo newspaper, can be utilised to communicate with parents. Schools are also encouraged to share the year plans with parents outlining what parents will be expected to do. In the absence of the year plans parents feel left out.

### **Volunteering**

Schools are expected to share their vision and challenges with community members. Such challenges may relate to shortages of personnel in certain departments in the school. Parents may be invited to assist in curbing crime, cleaning the school and other areas. Parents expect the schools to identify the key areas for involvement and then they can volunteer to assist in those areas.

### **Learning from home**

Educators are encouraged to communicate with parents about homework that they have given to learners. They also must clearly outline what they expect from parents as the learners work on the homework.

## **Decision making**

Principals and teachers need to empower parents so that they feel that their contributions are recognised. When parents feel belittled they develop resentment towards the school and its activities. The educators of the school are also expected to work towards a positive image of the school. If parents perceive the educators as not being serious, they too will not take the school seriously.

### **5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

One educator participant revealed that his attitude towards the importance of parental involvement had diminished as he gained more experience in the teaching profession. He indicated that, when he was still new to the profession, he struggled much with learner discipline. However, when he gained more experience it was no longer necessary to involve parents as he could now instil discipline with limited help from his superiors and parents.

This view raised a question that relates to whether an educator's experience can become a substitute to parental involvement. Further investigation may also be required to compare the perceptions of newly-appointed educators and those of experienced educators as far as parental involvement is concerned. Further investigations may also need to be conducted to determine how these two groups engage parents.

Lastly, one educator indicated that he only came to understand the provisions of SASA of 1996 once he became part of the SGB. The teacher reckoned that most educators and indeed the parents were ignorant of the provisions of SASA of 1996 which guides their conduct in the profession. It will be of great interest to investigate how this ignorance affects the way educators perform their duties and how schools are run.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The research study was aimed at answering the main research question on what was causing a lack of parental involvement among progressed grade 11 geography learners. The investigation adopted the interpretivist paradigm as the overall conceptual framework and was qualitative in nature. 15 participants were involved in the data collection exercise.

The typology of Epstein et al (1997) guided this research as the theoretical framework. Reasons for lack of parental involvement were traced back to the schools themselves and the parenting styles that families adopted. Ultimately, recommendations to improve parental participation were made to the three schools that were involved during the research.

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# Appendix A: Request permission form GDE



**GAUTENG PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**For admin. use only:**

Ref. no.:

## 2020 GDE RESEARCH REQUEST FORM

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN INSTITUTIONS AND/OR  
OFFICES OF THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### 1. PARTICULARS OF THE RESEARCHER

1.1	Details of the Researcher	
a) Surname and Initials:	TAFAMOMBE J.T.	
b) First Name/s:	JUSTIN TAFADZWA	
c) Title (Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms):	Mr	
d) Student Number:	50823175	
e) SA ID Number:	7309186073183	
f) Work permit no. (If not SA citizen)	N/A	

1.2	Private Contact Details	
a. Home Address	c. Postal Address (if different)	
25 Nel Street		
Roodepoort		
1724		
b. Postal Code: 1724	d. Postal Code:	
e. Tel: 074 635 3963	f. Cell: 074 635 3963	
g.	h. E-mail: <a href="mailto:jttafadzwa@gmail.com">jttafadzwa@gmail.com</a>	

## 2. PURPOSE & DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

2.1	Purpose of the Research (Place a cross where appropriate)	
	<i>Undergraduate Study – Self</i>	
	<i>Postgraduate Study – Self</i>	X
	<i>Private Company/Agency – Commissioned by Provincial Government or Department</i>	
	<i>Private Research by Independent Researcher</i>	
	<i>Non-Governmental Organisation</i>	
	<i>National Department of Education</i>	
	<i>Commissions and Committees</i>	
	<i>Independent Research Agencies</i>	
	<i>Statutory Research Agencies</i>	
	<i>Higher Education Institutions only</i>	
2.2	Full title of Thesis / Dissertation / Research Project	
	PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11 GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO	
2.3	Value of the Research to Education (Attach Research Proposal)	
	It may assist learners and educators to get the maximum assistance from parents through their involvement.	
	Research proposal attached.	
2.4		Date 24/04/2020
	a. <i>Estimated date of completion of research in GDE Institutions</i>	30 July 2020
	b. <i>Estimated date of submission of Research Report/ Thesis/Dissertation and Research Summary to GDE:</i>	31 August 2020
2.5	Student and Postgraduate Enrolment Particulars	
	a. <i>Name of institution where enrolled:</i>	Unisa
	b. <i>Degree / Qualification:</i>	Master of Education in Philosophy of Education
	c. <i>Faculty and Discipline / Area of Study:</i>	Philosophy of Education

d. Name of Supervisor / Promoter:	Dr S.T. Ngobeni
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2.6	Employer (or state Unemployed / or a Full Time Student) :
a. Name of Organisation:	Seanamarena High School
b. Position in Organisation:	Educator
c. Head of Organisation:	Mr N.A. Mokoena
d. Street Address:	No.1664 Pilane Street
	Mapetla
e. Postal Code:	1868
f. Telephone Number (Code + Ext):	011 986 1223
g. Fax Number:	011 984 0133
h. E-mail address:	<a href="mailto:seanamarenahigh@gmail.com">seanamarenahigh@gmail.com</a>

2.7	PERSAL Number (GDE employees only)
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2	3	0	1	9	6	7	1
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### 3. PROPOSED RESEARCH METHOD/S

(Please indicate by placing a cross in the appropriate block whether the following modes would be adopted)

#### 3.1 Questionnaire/s (If Yes, supply copies of each to be used)

YES		NO	X
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#### 3.2 Interview/s (If Yes, provide copies of each schedule)

YES	X	NO	
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#### 3.3 Use of official documents

YES		NO	X
If Yes, please specify the document/s: Reading screening and progress reports			



3.4 *Workshop/s / Group Discussions (If Yes, Supply details)*

YES		NO	X

3.5 *Standardised Tests (e.g. Psychometric Tests)*

YES		NO	X
<i>If Yes, please specify the test/s to be used and provide a copy/ies</i>			

4. INSTITUTIONS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH

4.1 TYPE and NUMBER of Institutions (*Please indicate by placing a cross alongside all types of institutions to be researched*)

INSTITUTIONS	Write NUMBER here
<i>Primary Schools</i>	
<i>Secondary Schools</i>	1
<i>ABET Centres</i>	
<i>ECD Sites</i>	
<i>LSEN Schools</i>	
<i>Further Education &amp; Training Institutions</i>	
<i>Districts and / or Head Office</i>	

4.2 Name/s of institutions to be approached for research (*Please complete on a separate sheet if space is found to be insufficient*).

Name/s of Institution/s
Seanamarena High School


4.3 District/s where the study is to be conducted. (Please indicate by placing a cross alongside the relevant district/s.)

District/s			
<i>Ekurhuleni North</i>		<i>Ekurhuleni South</i>	
<i>Gauteng East</i>		<i>Gauteng North</i>	
<i>Gauteng West</i>		<i>Johannesburg Central</i>	X
<i>Johannesburg East</i>		<i>Johannesburg North</i>	
<i>Johannesburg South</i>		<i>Johannesburg West</i>	
<i>Sedibeng East</i>		<i>Sedibeng West</i>	
<i>Tshwane North</i>		<i>Tshwane South</i>	
<i>Tshwane West</i>			

If Head Office/s (Please indicate Directorate/s)

4.4 Approximate number of learners to be involved per school (Please indicate the number by gender.)

Grade	1		2		3		4		5		6	
<i>Gender</i>	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
<i>Number</i>												

Grade	7		8		9		10		11		12	
<i>Gender</i>	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
<i>Number</i>									2	2		

4.5 Approximate number of educators/officials involved in the study (*Please indicate the number in the relevant column*)

Type of staff	Educators	HODs	Deputy Principals	Principal	Lecturers	Office Based Officials
Number	2					

4.6 Letters of Consent (*Attach copies of Consent letters to be used for Principal, SGB and all participants. For learners also include parental consent letter*)

4.7 Are the participants to be involved in groups or individually?

Groups		Individually	X
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4.8 Average period of time each participant will be involved in the test or other research activities (*Please indicate time in minutes for ALL participants*)

Participant/s	Activity	Time
Learners	Interviews	40
Educators	Interviews	40
Parents	Interviews	40

4.9 Time of day that you propose to conduct your research.

<u>Before school hours</u>		<u>During school hours (for limited observation only)</u>		<u>After School Hours</u>	X
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SEE Condition 5.4 on Page 7


4.10 School term/s during which the research would be undertaken

First Term		Second Term	X	Third Term	
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## 5. CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE

*Permission may be granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and permission may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:*

- 5.1 The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principal/s and the chairperson/s of the School Governing Body (SGB.) must be presented with a copy of this letter.*
- 5.2 The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the GDE District officials, principals, SGBs, teachers, parents and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid;*
- 5.3 Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded by the end of the THIRD quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
- 5.4 Research may only be conducted BEFORE or AFTER school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal and/or Director must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
- 5.5 Items 3 and 4 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
- 5.6 It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written consent from the SGB/s; principal/s, educator/s, parents and learners, as applicable, before commencing with research.*
- 5.7 The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilizing his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institution/s, staff and/or the office/s visited for supplying such resources.*
- 5.8 All research conducted in GDE Institutions is anonymous. The names and personal details of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may neither be asked nor appear in the research title, report / thesis/ dissertation or GDE Research Summary.*
- 5.9 On successful completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management, with electronic copies of the Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation as well as a Research Summary (on the GDE Summary template). Failure to submit these documents may result in future permission being withheld, or a fine imposed for BOTH the Researcher and the Supervisor.*
- 5.10 Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director/s and school/s concerned must also be supplied with a GDE Summary.*
- 5.11 The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned;*

6. DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER	
6.1	<i>I declare that all statements made by myself in this application are true and accurate.</i>
6.2	<i>I have read, understand and accept ALL the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research in GDE Institutions and I undertake to abide by them. I understand that failure to comply may result in permission being withdrawn, further permission being withheld, a fine imposed and legal action may be taken against me. This agreement is binding.</i>
6.3	<i>I promise once I have successfully completed my studies, (before graduation) or on successful project completion, to submit electronic copies of my Research Report / Thesis / Dissertation as well a GDE Summary on the GDE template sent to me with my approval letter or found on <a href="http://www.education.gpg.gov.za">www.education.gpg.gov.za</a></i>
Signature:	
Date:	24 April 2020

<b>7. DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR / LECTURER / PROMOTER</b>	
7.1	<i>I declare that: (Name of Researcher): Tafamombe Justin Tafadzwa</i>
7.2	<i>is enrolled at the institution / employed by the organisation to which the undersigned is attached.</i>
7.3	<i>The questionnaires / structured interviews / tests meet the criteria of:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Educational Accountability;</i></li> <li>• <i>Proper Research Design;</i></li> <li>• <i>Sensitivity towards Participants;</i></li> <li>• <i>Correct Content and Terminology;</i></li> <li>• <i>Acceptable Grammar;</i></li> <li>• <i>Absence of Non-essential / Superfluous items;</i></li> <li>• <i>Ethical clearance</i></li> </ul>
7.4	<i>The student/researcher has agreed to ALL the conditions of conducting research in GDE Institutions and will abide by them.</i>
7.5	<i>I will ensure that after success completion of the research degree / project / study an electronic copy of the Research Report / Thesis / Dissertation and a Research Summary (on the GDE template) will be sent to the GDE. Failure to submit the Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation and Research Summary may result in: permission being withheld from BOTH the student and the Supervisor in future and a fine may be imposed.</i>
7.6	Surname: Ngobeni
7.7	First Name/s: S.T
7.8	Title: Dr
7.9	Institution / Organisation: Unisa
7.10	Faculty / Department: Education
7.11	Telephone: 072 186 4644
7.12	E-mail address: <a href="mailto:engobest@unisa.ac.za">engobest@unisa.ac.za</a>
7.13	Signature:
7.14	Date:

## ANNEXURE A: GROUP RESEARCH

This information must be completed by every researcher/ student / field worker who will be visiting GDE Institutions for research purposes, besides the main researcher who applied and the Supervisor/ lecturer / Promoter of the research.

By signing this declaration, the researcher / students / fieldworker accepts the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research in GDE Institutions and undertakes to abide by them.

Supervisor/ Promoter / Lecturer's Surname and Name.....

### DECLARATION BY RESEARCHERS / STUDENTS:

Surname & Initials	Name	Tel	Cell	Email address	Signature

N.B. This form (and all other relevant documentation where available) may be completed and forwarded electronically to [Gumani.Mukatuni@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Gumani.Mukatuni@gauteng.gov.za) and please copy (cc) [Faiht.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Faiht.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za) and [ResearchInfo@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:ResearchInfo@gauteng.gov.za). The last 2 pages of this document must however have the original signatures of both the researcher and his/her supervisor or promoter. It should be scanned and emailed, posted or hand delivered (in a sealed envelope) to Gumani Mukatuni, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Marshal Street,

Johannesburg. All enquiries pertaining to the status of research requests can be directed to Gumani Mukatuni on tel. no. 011 355 0775.

Other Information:

- i) On receipt of all emails, confirmation of receipt will be sent to the researcher. The researcher will be contacted via email if any documents are missing or if any additional information is needed.
- ii) If the GDE Research request submitted is approved, a GDE Research Approval letter will be sent by email to the researcher as well as the Supervisor / Lecturer / Promoter. Please ensure that your email address is correct.
- iii) After successful completion of your research, please send your Research Reports / Thesis / Dissertations and GDE Research Summaries (on the template provided to both the Researcher and the Supervisor with the GDE Research Approval letter) to the same addresses as the GDE Research Request documents were sent to, namely:  
[Gumani.Mukatuni@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Gumani.Mukatuni@gauteng.gov.za) and copy  
[David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za); or [Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za)  
and [ResearchInfo@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:ResearchInfo@gauteng.gov.za).



## Appendix B: Interview questions

### Appendix B1: Interview questions for parents

The interview will be unstructured by will try to answer the following questions

- A) Laddered questioning
  - i Greetings. How are you doing today?
  - ii Can you confirm that you have a child who was progressed to grade 11 and doing Geography in 2020?
  - iii Do you think your child has the potential to do better this year?
  
- B) Knowledgeable or Invasive questions
  - i How did you feel when you learnt that your child did not necessarily pass grade 10 but was progressed?
  - ii What do you think are some of the reasons that might have led to your child not passing grade 10?
  - iii Do you always attend parents' meetings called by the schools? If not please provide some possible reasons for nonattendance.
  
- C) Questions pertaining to personal philosophy
  - i what is your personal opinion on the nature of parents' meetings? Do you think they help much in improving performance of learners?
  - ii Are there any recommendations that you can put towards the holding of such meetings?
  - iii When learners fail in your view who should shoulder much blame?
  - iv Do you feel as a parent you have a role to play in the academic performance of your child?
  - v Elaborate on your expectations from educators that may make you to be more productive as you get involved in your child's education.
  - vi Do you believe that parents should be blamed when learners do not perform well at schools? Elaborate.
  - vii Do you think teachers regard you partners who can make significant contributions in the school's activities?

## Appendix B2: Interview questions for Educators

The interview will be unstructured but will try to answer the following questions.

- A) Laddered questioning.
  - i Greetings. How are you today?
  - ii How is the teaching learning process today?
  - iii Would you think your pass percentage target is a realistic target?
  - iv How are current learners performing and how would describe their attitudes to education?
  
- B) Knowledgeable or Invasive questions.
  - i Teachers are always blamed for the academic under performance of learners. What is your personal feeling on this?
  - ii Do you feel there are issues that are beyond your call that make learners to underperform? Elaborate.
  - iii Do you sometimes invite parents to school? If yes, what are some of the reasons that lead you to invite parents. If not, why don't you ever invite parents?
  - iv Do you ever discuss the agenda of meetings with parents or you decide them alone?
  - v Are parents also always welcome to come to schools. What are the opportunities available for them to come and initiate meetings?
  
- C) Questions pertaining to personal philosophy
  - i What is your personal feeling on the nature of parents-teacher meetings? Briefly describe what goes on in a typical parent-teacher meeting at your school.
  - ii Do you believe parents can be a vital component in the academic achievement of learners?
  - iii How would you describe the nature of parental involvement at your school in general and in your subject in particular?
  - iv What are your personal expectations from parents as you endeavour to improve the academic performance of the learners?
  - v In your view why are parents not fully involved in their children's education in your subject.

- vi What will be your recommendations to the school, parents and any other stakeholders to get parents to become more involved in their children's education?

### Appendix B3: Interview questions for learners

The interview will be unstructured by will try to answer the following questions.

D) Laddered questioning.

- i Greetings. How are you today?
- ii How is grade 11 this year and are feeling positive of better results this year.
- iii Do you believe you have what it takes to get you to grade 12 and eventually to university or a college of your choice?

E) Knowledgeable or Invasive questions

- i Last year you did not pass Geography. Can you shade some light on what could have contributed towards that?
- ii Did your parents attend all parents' meetings last year? If not do you know why?
- iii When your parents come to school or they do not come, what is your personal feeling about it. Do you feel they must come to school for whatever reason?
- iv Is your home environment conducive to learning? Elaborate.

F) Questions pertaining to personal philosophy

- i Do you personally believe your parents can help you to achieve better results? Elaborate.
- ii In what ways do you think the school or teachers should involve parents in your schooling process?
- iii Among the following stakeholder, Parents, Educators and Peers which segment do you consider to be helping you much in your schooling journey. In which group do you think less is being done and why?
- iv Are there any recommendations that you would want to make to your parents and educators to have more parental involvement in your education?

# Appendix C: Information data sheet

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Date: 24 April 2020

Title: Mr .....

### DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Tafamombe J.T. I am doing research under the supervision of Dr S.T. Ngobeni, a lecturer in the Department of Education, towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Unisa bursary Funding for post graduate studies. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled:

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11 GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO.**

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could be used to explain the effects parental involvement on the academic performance of learners.

#### WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you or your child was progressed to grade 11.

I obtained your contact details from the school through the principal Mr Mokoena N.A. Four learners and four parents will be involved.

#### WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves audio recorded interviews with semi-structured interviews. The interview questions will relate to your own perceptions on the role that parents must play in the academic wellbeing of learners. The interviews are expected to last between 30-40 minutes. These interviews will be done after school.

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

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written assent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

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

The benefits of participating in the study is that it might unlock the need for parental involvement which might ultimately lead to better results on the learner

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

You will be asked to stay a little longer after the school to participate in the interview. Parents will have to sacrifice their time for the interview. Other learners might label participating learners as weak learners as a result of your participation.

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

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Should your responses be needed for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings your name will not be used.

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

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked my filing cabinet at 25 Nel Street for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. When no longer needed hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

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

No payment to you will be done. It is absolutely voluntary participation.

#### HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of Unisa.

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

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Tafamombe J.T. on 074 635 3963 or email [jttafadzwa@gmail.com](mailto:jttafadzwa@gmail.com)

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Ngobeni on 072 186 4644 or email [engobest@unisa.ac.za](mailto:engobest@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.



Tafamombe J.T.

## Appendix D: Request to school principal

Request for permission to conduct research at: .....

Title of my research:

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11 GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO

Date: 24 April 2020

Name of the person to whom you address the request: .....

Department of the person: GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Contact details of the person: 082 600 7796.

Dear

I, Justin Tafadzwa Tafamombe am doing research under supervision of Dr S.T Ngobeni, a Lecturer in the Department of Education towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Unisa Bursary fund for Post Graduate studies. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled:

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11 GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO.**

The aim of the study is to:

This study will explore how lack of parental involvement on progressed grade 11 Geography learners may contribute to poor performance on the learners.

Your school has been selected because the researcher is an educator at the school and it has some progressed grade 11 Geography learners.

*The study will entail interviewing four progressed grade 11 geography learners, the parents of the same learners and the two educators teaching those learners.*

The benefits of this study are that it may give insights onto challenges that limit parental involvement in the school.

Potential risks are it might lead to stigma on participating learners as they may be labelled weak by other learners.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail giving participants access to audio recordings as well as the transcribed interview.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J.T. Tafamombe', is written in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is positioned above a solid black horizontal line.

J.T. Tafamombe

**Educator**



# Appendix E: Consent letter to parents

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

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

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

I agree to the recording of the interview.

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

Participant Name & Surname \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Researcher's Name & Surname:

Justin T. Tafamombe

  
\_\_\_\_\_

24 April 2020

Researcher's signature

Date

## Appendix F: Assent letter form child

Title : PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11  
GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I am doing a study on parental involvement among high school learners as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways that your teachers can use to involve your parents better. This may help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

I would like to interview you about your perceptions on how parents must get involved in your education. The interview is going to about 30-40 minutes long.

I will write a report on the study but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

The benefits of this study are to give teachers and parents insights into the benefits of involving parents in the academic performance of learners.

Potential risks are that you will be expected to remain at school for about 30-40 minutes after school to undertake the interview.

You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me on 074 635 3963. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: Tafamombe Justin T.

Cellphone number: 074 635 3963

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

#### WRITTEN ASSENT

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's name (print):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's signature:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's name (print):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's signature:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's name (print):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's signature:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tafamombe J.T.**



Researcher's name (print):

Researcher's signature:

Date: 24 APRIL 2020

## Appendix G: Letter requesting parental consent for minors to participate

### 4.3 LETTER REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Parent

Your child is invited to participate in a study entitled:

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PROGRESSED GRADE 11 GEOGRAPHY LEARNERS IN SOWETO

I am undertaking this study as part of my master's research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of parental involvement on the academic performance of learners and the possible benefits of the study are the improvement of parental involvement in schools. I am asking permission to include your child in this study because he or she was progressed to grade 11 and has the potential to improve if he or she gets the necessary support. I expect to have four other children participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

Take part in an interview that will be recorded at the school after 15:00.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are it will help teachers with information on how best to involve parents in the teaching and learning process. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will

not affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place during regular classroom activities but after school with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

The benefits of this study are that parents and teachers will know their different roles and responsibilities in the teaching and learning process.

Potential risk is that your child may be expected to stay longer at school to be engaged in the interview.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

If you have questions about this study please ask me or my study supervisor, Dr ST Ngobeni, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 074 635 3963 and my e-mail is [jttafadzwa@gmail.com](mailto:jttafadzwa@gmail.com). The e-mail of my supervisor is [engobest@unisa.ac.za](mailto:engobest@unisa.ac.za). Permission for the study has already been given by the principal and the SGB and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's name (print):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's signature:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely

**Tafamombe J.T.**  
Researcher's name (print):



Researcher's signature:

Date: 24 APRIL 2020