

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF PREVIOUSLY
DISADVANTAGED LEARNERS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS TO ATTEND
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN JOHANNESBURG**

by

NOMUSA BONISIWE MCHUNU

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SUPERVISOR: DR HM VOGEL

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DECLARATION

I declare that: **Parent involvement and the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

30/09/2012

DATE

NOMUSA B. MCHUNU

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of parent involvement on the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners who was awarded scholarships to attend independent boys' schools in Johannesburg. Through a qualitative inquiry using a small sample of parents and teachers (SSP coordinators), the findings added to the existing literature review. There is evidence that parent involvement is essential in high school and that parent involvement at home has an impact on the learners' achievement irrespective of the parents' socio-economic status and level of education. Furthermore, the results support the assumption that, the sense of not belonging and other barriers that hinder parents from being involved in school activities could be resolved by improving communication and forging a healthy relationship between parents and teachers. This creates a need for a parent involvement programme that will attend to the needs of the parents and teachers. This programme will empower them with skills that will improve their partnership.

KEY WORDS

Parent involvement; previously disadvantaged; independent/private schools; parents; learners

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND, FORMULATION OF PROBLEM AND AIMS

1.1 BACKGROUND

Scholarly and public interest in the involvement of parents in their children's education together with partnerships in education are not new concepts. From prehistoric cultures to our modern society, the family has been the most important social setting for educating the child (Barbour, Barbour & Scully, 2007:33). Parents make key contributions to their children's learning from early childhood through to secondary school. Studies and research that have been conducted throughout the world on this particular subject concluded that parental involvement has benefits for learners, teachers and parents. Thus, it is an essential ingredient of educational practice and school improvement efforts. Decker, Decker and Brown (2007:1) support the significance of parent involvement by stating that it has become increasingly necessary for schools to reach out to all the stakeholders in their schools in order to establish and nurture supportive networks which are committed in helping all children to succeed.

In the same vein, Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies (2007:1) affirm this by stating that: 'partnerships among schools, families and community groups are not a luxury - they are a necessity'.

In the United States, recent educational reforms included legislation which promotes parent and community involvement in school policies. Examples of these policies, to mention only a few, are:

- *The Head Start Improvement Act (1992),*
- *Goals 2000.* One of the eight goals of this act states that every school is compelled to increase parent involvement,

- *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. In Title1 schools and parents have rights to select preferred schools and these schools must have a school-parent team which describes how both the school and the parents will build a partnership that will improve student achievement.

Wolfendale (1996:41) asserts that parents and cares, who were once so marginalized within education and the delivery of service to children, are now assuming a centre-stage role in England. Reay (2005:23) affirms that the partnership between parents and teachers has become enshrined in British educational policies. During the 1990s, parent involvement was officially recognized as a key factor in school improvement and effectiveness. In 1994, parent involvement became an essential part of a school's development plan in England (Reay, 2005:25). In the *1997 White Paper 'Excellence in Schools'*, the British Government set out a strategy for securing parent involvement which included three elements:

- providing parents with information – their right as 'consumers';
- giving parents a voice;
- and encouraging parental partnerships with schools.

Moreover, with the most recent White Paper, 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All (2005)', the British government seeks to increase parental choice, responsibility, power and involvement (Reynolds, 2005:17). Reay (2005: 25) concludes that: 'We (in England) have now reached a point when parental involvement is no longer optional'.

This emphasis on parent participation is seen not only in Britain and the United States. Many changes have also been made in the South African education system by the democratic government since 1994. The process of transforming the education system, improving schools and restoring the culture of teaching and learning in schools, was characterized by new regulations, a range of policies, legislation and acts. One such Act is the South African Schools Act (Act no. 84 of 1996). This Act requires all schools to

create a school governing body so that parents and communities can be involved in school activities and in their children's education. The South African Schools Act and its provision for school governing bodies is based on the idea of a 'neighbourhood' or 'community' school (Van Wyk, 2002:144). Thus, the principal is no longer expected to carry the load of running the school alone. The main purpose of this Act was to enable all stakeholders, especially parents, to play a central role in the education of their children and to bring a sense of ownership to the communities (Mathonsi, 2001:1). This was in line with the statement of the first minister of education, Prof Sibusiso Bhengu, in his address to parliament: 'education must be ploughed back to the community'. The Act also emphasizes that parents would constitute the majority of the stakeholders in the governing bodies of the public school (1996:18). These developments are regarded as marking the end to isolated and 'parentless' schools which used to be characterized by little or no parental involvement (Qonde, 2000:2).

In spite of the overwhelming agreement by researchers and studies worldwide that home-school partnerships are necessary, studies show that there is low parent involvement in schools (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004a: 260; Mmotlane, Winnaar & wa Kivilu, 2009: 528).

In view of what has been said, this study will focus on parental involvement and its effect on educational achievement of previously disadvantaged learners at independent schools.

1.1.1 Parent involvement in general

Researchers and authors differ as to the precise definition of parent involvement as it means different things to different individuals. The way the term is understood differs from school to school and from community to community. Lemmer (2000:61) goes on to explain that even schools and families seldom share the same perspectives on what is wanted or needed. Christenson and Conoley (1992:21) define parental involvement as any of a variety of activities that allow parents to participate in the educational

process at home or in school. Epstein (2008) (cited in Olsen & Fuller, 2008:128) extended the term parent involvement to 'school, family and community partnerships', to show how children learn and develop in the school, the home and the community. Furthermore, Epstein suggests that parent involvement should be broadly defined as a comprehensive programme. Similarly, Van Wyk (1996:1) supports this by stating that it is not an easy task to define the phrase 'parent involvement' seeing that this phrase is used to encompass a broad spectrum of activities. Moles (1982:45), cited in Kgaffe (2001:2) concludes that:

The general feeling about the concept of parent involvement is that it includes a broad array of activities both at home and at school as well as the parents' transmission of their own skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to learners by modeling acceptable behaviour by guiding their activities and by giving direct instruction.

Many studies have documented the importance of this involvement from primary school through to secondary school. Yet, the degree and the level of involvement by parents are not realized to the full especially in secondary schools. The nature of parent involvement changes as learners get older and varies from family to family. A considerable body of evidence suggests that participation by parents is linked to school success and other benefits for learners, the school and community. Unfortunately, however, parent involvement activities dramatically decline as learners enter the middle grades and even more so as they enter secondary school (Hasley, 2005:57).

1.1.2 The benefits of parent involvement

According to Decker et al (2007:2) everyone wins when families and communities are involved in schools. Furthermore, a growing body of research continues to demonstrate that parent involvement has a significant impact on learners' achievement. These beneficial effects of parent involvement on education have been reported from

childhood through to secondary school (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005: 164; Sanders & Lewis 2005:1).

Henderson and Mapp (2002:7) support the above:

The evidence is consistent, positive and convincing: families have a major influence on children's achievement in school and through life. When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more.

Others, such as Lemmer and van Wyk (2004a: 260) agree with the findings, stating that the most effective education occurs when families and schools work together in a shared enterprise.

In spite of these benefits and the overwhelming agreement on the importance of parental involvement, there isn't much commitment and participation of parents. According to Henderson et al (2007:27) educators and parents have many beliefs, attitudes and fears about each other that hinder their coming together to promote children's education. Parents are not aware that there are wider, useful roles that they can play. Thus several models of classification of parent involvement have been developed. These include: Gordon's systems approach, Berger's role categories, Swap's school-to-home model, and Epstein's typologies, only to mention a few.

Epstein's research offers a comprehensive parent involvement programme and is the preferred model in the United States of America. This model and the six areas identified in the model have, therefore, been selected for the study. In addition, Comer's School Development Programme (SDP), and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of parent involvement will serve as the framework for the investigation of parent involvement in some independent secondary schools in Johannesburg. These models

and other benefits of parent participation will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 2.

1.1.3 Parent involvement in South African schools

The shift in attitude concerning parent involvement is also very relevant in the South African educational context. Parents are more and more being recognized by the government as essential to effective schools and to the transformation process of education. Emphasis and recognition of increased parent and community involvement is evident in recent legislation such as: The White Paper on Education and Training (RSA 1995:21) and The South African Schools Act [SASA] (RSA 1996a:50). According to van Wyk (2001:117) The South African Schools Act (RSA 1996:4, henceforth referred to as SASA) does not confine the term 'parent' to only a biological parent but allows for broader definition of 'parent' which encourages schools to acknowledge a variety of family types and household structures and therefore develop a versatile range of practices of family-school partnerships.

The SASA regards parental involvement in schools as the cornerstone to school reform (Mathonsi, 2001:2). A governing body is created for every public and independent school with the parents in the majority. They, therefore, have more power and a greater role to play in the governance of the school. According to the Act, one of the responsibilities of the governing body will be:

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. Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

Researchers Mmotlane, Winnaar and Kivilu (2009:529) argue that the South African approach to involvement follows the stipulations of the SASA whose view is more aligned with school governance and representation. In general, this involvement is often

restricted to the activities of the governing bodies, but makes no provision for other types of parent involvement. Findings from South African studies assert that there is a need for a broader conceptualization of parent involvement which includes, but transcends, parent participation in school governance (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004a: 261). Heystek and Paquette (1999:195) affirm this: 'Parental participation is not only in governance, but also at other levels in the school. At the lowest level of management and decision-making, parents can assist their children with their homework and motivate them to be positive towards school and their education'.

The SASA was also amended in 2000 (RSA 2000) to ensure that the racial composition of the school population is better represented on the school governing bodies. This includes co-opting members to the school governing bodies (SGB), who represent the racial and linguistic composition of the learners and giving these members full voting powers (Van Wyk, 2001:117).

The Department of Basic Education recently launched the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) which is aimed at encouraging parents, communities, business and other stakeholders to support education. To show their commitment, parents have to sign a letter of commitment which lists activities they will perform to be involved in their children's learning. The Gauteng Department of education has on its website a comprehensive document that stipulates home-based involvement activities which could benefit parents with children in primary schools.

In view of the above, the government is committed to improving the partnership between school, the family and the community. Until now, however, the involvement of previously disadvantaged parents in learners' education in public schools is still not realized. Existing research indicates that parent involvement in school activities is low, especially in the rural areas and lower socio-economic areas in South Africa (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004a: 262; Mmotlane et al., 2009:529).

Henderson et al (2007:115) state that: 'The school-home partnership should be built on the fact that all families, no matter what their income, race, education, language or culture, want their children to do well in school, and can make an important contribution to their children's learning.'

Taking into consideration all the elements discussed above on parent participation in public schools, this study will also focus on how a strong partnership can be forged between educators and previously disadvantaged parents at independent secondary schools in Johannesburg.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Awareness of the problem

In my eleven years of teaching at an independent school, I have noticed two things. Firstly, I have noticed the difference in educational attainment and adjustment of some previously disadvantaged learners in the school. Each year learners from low socio-economic backgrounds are granted academic scholarships. I have seen some of these learners succeed academically, in leadership positions and achieve at sports. At the same time I have seen learners who fail to adjust and to achieve academically. Others have behavioural problems that lead them to being expelled from the school. Secondly, I have perceived the absence of some of these learners' parents in attending parent-teacher information meetings and other school functions. I teach some of the learners from Grades 8 to Grade 12 and yet I (for five years) have never met their parents. It seems like they have passed on their responsibilities to the teachers. Yet, on the other hand, the school management increased the number of parents' evenings, mark orders and parent information evenings because the 'parents want to know about their children's progress.'

I propose that the findings from the research will be useful because:

- it will make parents aware of their role and responsibilities in their children's education and the factors that contribute to or hinder their children's success;
- it will lead to identifying barriers and make recommendations on how to enhance parental involvement. Lemmer and van Wyk (2004a: 261) pointed out that a comprehensive model of parental involvement is uncommon in South Africa. Thus there is a place for creating such a model.
- most of the studies examining parental involvement in secondary schools have been done in other countries like the United States and England. This study will focus on a South African context specifically at independent schools because there are quite a number of organisations which sponsor previously disadvantaged learners to attend independent schools.

1.2.2 Statement of the problem

The purpose of the study is to determine the influence of parent involvement on the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg.

1.3 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

1.3.1 General aim

An exploratory dimension is inherent in this research. Exploratory research takes place where there is a lack of basic information or where there is a new phenomenon requiring research. Parental involvement and its appearance in independent schools with learners in a specific Student Sponsored Programme (SSP) are unexplored. Secondly, the Student Sponsorship Programme has been in existence for a few years in Gauteng province, later in the Eastern Cape, and we have been inundated with success stories and good matric results yet never paid much attention to parents and their children that are struggling. Furthermore, the research instrument and findings may

inform all stakeholders of difficulties encountered by parents and find ways to make parent involvement effective. Lastly, the findings could also serve as a basis for further research.

1.3.2 Specific aim

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

- To identify how the parents are involved in their children's learning and its effect on their academic achievement in some independent secondary schools in Johannesburg.
- To explore barriers to parental involvement and provide recommendations on how these independent schools can assist parents to become more effective in their involvement.

1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

1.4.1 Literature study

A literature study will be conducted to identify studies, policies, educational legislation, journals, articles and reports relating to the theory of parent involvement focusing on previously disadvantaged parents and learners at independent schools. The aim of the literature study is to review relevant sources and investigate what is already known concerning parental involvement. Only current, reliable and applicable data will be considered. Both international and local sources will be used but a large number will be international as few studies of this nature have been conducted locally.

1.4.2 Qualitative research

A qualitative approach will be employed through individual interviews with the SSP learners' parents at their homes, a group discussion with teachers (SSP coordinators) from each school, observations and reviewing documents and relevant websites in each of the three schools. This is in line with the characteristics of a qualitative research, namely that it takes place at a natural setting, uses a small sample but gathers detailed data (Creswell 2007).

Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in its natural setting rather than in laboratories and uses multiple methods of data collection. Marshall and Rossman (2006:2) state that qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the lived experiences of people.

In this study semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were used to get as many details as possible and allow for the participants to answer from their own frame of reference and express their thoughts, views and experiences regarding parent involvement and its impact on the learners' achievement. Supporting this viewpoint Simango (2006:8) contends that a qualitative research design seeks to understand human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them.

The researcher conducted in-depth individual interviews with the parents and give them a platform to give an account of their understanding and experiences of parent involvement. In the group discussion with educators, the researcher wants to find out what they understand about parent involvement, and what are they doing to support parents to be involved in their children's education.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003:4) acknowledge this:

Qualitative research uses methods which usually involve close contact between the researcher and the people being studied, where the researcher is the instrument. Thus

the credibility of a qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher.

Being close to the participants will enable the researcher to conduct an in-depth inquiry in order to learn about parent involvement in these schools and to generate new understanding of the phenomenon that can be used.

In qualitative research samples are purposively selected on the basis of specific characteristics. In this regard three independent boys' secondary schools in Johannesburg were selected. In these schools both the parents and teachers (also SSP coordinators) were given an opportunity to describe their own experiences of parent involvement.

The researcher was the primary instrument to collect data through observations, face-to-face interviewing, open-ended questionnaires and documents. All the interviews were recorded on audio tape and then transcribed data was analysed by the researcher. Data was coded and relationships established.

As a teacher at an independent school for eleven years the personal experience of the researcher may contribute to value of this study.

1.5 DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH

As mentioned above, the study took place at three all boys' independent secondary schools in northern suburbs of Johannesburg. The schools are predominantly white schools in the high fee category. All three schools offer scholarships in partnership with the Student Sponsorship Programme (SSP) to previously disadvantaged learners. The Student Sponsorship Programme is an organization that sponsors previously disadvantaged learners' scholarships to attend independent schools.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Parent involvement

The meaning and definition of the phrase 'parent involvement' differs widely. Van Wyk (1996:1) states that defining the phrase 'parent involvement' is not an easy task as this phrase is used to encompass a broad spectrum of activities. In the same vein, Bridgemohan (2001:2) concurs that the term 'parent involvement' has undergone a metamorphosis over the past few decades and means different things to different individuals and institutions.

Kgaffe (2001:2) regards 'parent involvement' as the support of parents in school activities in and out of school for the benefit of learners' academic achievement and school effectiveness.

According to Moles (cited in Olsen & Fuller, 2008:128) parent involvement may take a variety of forms and levels of involvement both in and out of school. It includes any activities that are provided and encouraged by the school and that empower parents in working on behalf of their children's learning and development.

1.6.2 A Parent

The term 'parent' is broadly defined and includes a person who is the learner's guardian, or who is legally entitled to custody of the learner, or who has undertaken to fulfill the obligations of a parent or guardian towards the learner's education (South African Schools Act (1996a)).

1.6.3 Independent / private school

The South African Schools Act of 1996 recognises only two categories of schools: public and independent schools. Public schools are state controlled and independent

schools are privately governed. Independent schools are defined by the Gauteng School Education Act 6 of 1995 as schools 'other than public schools'. All private schools are included in the independent schools' category.

Kitaev (1999:43) defines independent schools as all formal schools that are not public and may be founded, owned, managed and financed by individuals other than the state, even in cases when the state provides most of the funding and has considerable control over these schools.

The current landscape of independent schooling has a segmented profile characterized by two types of schools: smaller predominantly African, low average fee schools and larger, predominantly white, high-fee schools.

1.6.4 Previously disadvantaged

According to the National Empowerment Fund Act (1998) the term historically disadvantaged person refers to:

Those persons or categories of persons who, prior to the new democratic dispensation marked by the coming into force of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), were disadvantaged by unfair discrimination on the basis of their race and includes juristic persons or associations owned or controlled by such persons.

Paraphrased, this term refers to black individuals who were, by design, socially, economically, educationally and otherwise, underprivileged and deprived by the previous South African government's political history of white supremacy and inequitable racial treatment. The term historically disadvantaged person (HDP) is used synonymously with such terms as previously disadvantaged individuals (Nefcorp, 2005, cited in Mokoena, 2006:11). Historically disadvantaged persons exclusively refer to

black people, generically comprising Africans, 'coloured' people and Indians. The HDPs are among the designated underdeveloped population group in South Africa (Mokoena, 2006:11). This study will focus on these African learners only.

1.7 RESEARCH PROGRAMME

This study consists of five chapters:

Chapter 1 serves to introduce the research topic. The research problem has been formulated and the aims of the research have been described. The reader is introduced to the key concern of the research and the research methodology is explained.

Chapter 2 reports on the relevant literature.

Chapter 3 explains the research design that is used in the study. The data collection instrument and the research process are described in this chapter.

Chapter 4 contains the body of the report. It presents the findings and analysis of the investigation.

Chapter 5 contains the reflection on the completed research process, giving a summary of the main facts found in the literature review and the main findings of the study. Conclusions are drawn and the limitations of the study pointed out. Recommendations will be made on the basis of the analysed and interpreted data.

1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter presented an overview of what this research study seeks to accomplish and how it aims to do this. The research design, methodology, aims and objectives, sampling issues and outline of the study have been identified.

In the next chapter, a review of literature and of the theories on parental involvement will be presented in order to show how the involvement of parents in schools has developed over the years and its impact on the learners.

CHAPTER 2

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Recent research on home-school partnerships, both nationally and internationally, points to positive effects on learners, families and schools when all the parties concerned, that is schools, parents and communities, continuously support and encourage their children's learning and development (Reay, 2005; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Sanders & Lewis 2005). Henderson and Mapp's (2002:7) research report concluded that learners with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, were more likely to gain the following benefits: to obtain better results and performance in tests; to enrol in higher level courses; to pass their classes and be promoted to the next grade; to attend school regularly; to have better social skills; to show improved behaviour both in and out of school and to adapt well to school; and finish their basic education and go on to institutions of higher education.

These beneficial effects have been documented for primary as well as secondary school learners. In spite of the fact that these benefits have been proven, the home-school partnerships have not been shown to have been strengthened in secondary schools when compared to primary schools. Instead there has been a dramatic decline in parent participation. Communication, lack of resources, educators' and parents' beliefs, attitudes and values are some of the commonly cited barriers to an effective partnership.

Studies by Epstein (1995, 2001) and others challenged the common belief that secondary school learners actually prefer that their parents should not be involved in their education or social lives. After her latest findings from literature on family involvement in secondary school, Epstein (2008:9) deduced that:

- Parents want more and better information to be able to guide their children through middle and secondary school.
- Learners benefit from family and community involvement in secondary school.
- Educators in secondary schools must take responsibility for developing goal-linked partnership programmes that reach all families and help learners succeed.

Furthermore, Epstein states: 'This disconnect between knowledge and behaviour can be corrected with new approaches that make it possible for every school to organise an excellent partnership program'. Over the years various collaboration programmes, which have as their common goal to involve parents on all levels in their children's education, have been developed. These authors concur with Epstein that the school is ultimately the catalyst for building relationships. However, seeing that there is no one blueprint, the school should strive to identify the needs and to find what will work for its staff and parents so that learners could succeed.

In view of these findings, this chapter attempts to review the relevant available literature, firstly on Epstein's model of parent involvement that provides a strong theoretical framework and that presents the six ways through which parents can be involved in their children's learning. Secondly, Comer's School Development Programme (SDP) will be considered and finally, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of parent involvement which examines predictors of parents' motivations for involvement and how these motivations influence parents decisions to be involved in their children's education. It also investigates the barriers to family involvement and the benefits of involving parents as partners in secondary school.

2.2 MODELS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The findings from the last decades of research concluded that numerous types of parenting practices associated with positive educational outcomes and social

competencies have been designed. These practices may vary from volunteering, provision of home support, participation in school boards or council and attending parent information evenings. At the same time, several models of classification of parental involvement have been developed over the years. These include Gordon's systems approach, Comer's School Development Programme (SDP) and Swap's school-to-home model. The two most frequently cited models in the United States of America, are Epstein's typology of school-family-community partnership (which offers a comprehensive parent involvement framework) and Comer's School Development Programme. These models demonstrate the different types and levels of participation, and also factors that both enhance partnerships and have shown success in improving schools and children's education and development through family-school-community partnerships.

2.2.1 Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence

Epstein's theoretical model of the overlapping spheres of influence shows how the home, the school, and the community interact in an integrated manner in order to promote child and adolescent learning and development. It emphasizes that youngsters are best supported when families and schools have shared goals and when they work collaboratively on these goals. The school is placed in the center and is seen as a broker for starting and facilitating the partnership (Barbour et al., 2007: 337).

This model has external and internal structures. The external structure model recognises that the three major contexts in which children learn and grow are the family, the school and the community. These three are independent institutions and spheres of influence which can overlap to a greater or lesser degree (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004b:183). By working together, the family and school's spheres of influence overlap, which in turn increases communication and collaboration. If the school, families, and communities don't collaborate, these spheres are pulled apart. Traditionally, as learners get older, the spheres of influence are more often pulled apart if parents feel less able to support their children and if schools assume that parents are less influential or less

interested in supporting their adolescents (Simon & Epstein 2001:3). Epstein and Sanders (2006:87) identified key intersecting forces that affect the nature and extent of connections. These include the learners' age, their grade levels, and family, school, and community backgrounds, philosophies, experiences and opportunities.

This model also specifies an internal structure of interpersonal relationships and exchanges of information between and among parents, children, educators, and members of the community (Epstein & Sanders, 2006:87). These exchanges may occur at the institutional level (e.g. when schools invite all families or community groups to an event) and at the individual level (e.g. when a teacher and parent confer about one learner's work). The internal structure sets the learner at the centre of the model as the main actor in learning and as the reason why parents and educators communicate (Simon & Epstein, 2001:4). According to Epstein, (2001:31) academic learning and social development are influenced by the child, the school and the family policies, parent and teacher interactions, and the child's understanding and reactions to these connections. Simon and Epstein (2001:4) further assert that if successful, the interactions and social ties developed among partners in education will generate 'social capital' that may be used to benefit learners, families, schools, and the community. The combined endeavour of parents and teachers pushes the spheres of family and school influence together, and the increased interaction between parents and schools result in 'family-like schools' and 'school-like families' (Lemmer, 2000: 64).

In 'family-like schools' educators welcome parents and community partners and treat each learner as an individual, making them feel special and included. Communities also create family-like settings, services and events to enable families to better support their children better (Barbour et al., 2007: 337).

In 'school-like families' parents guide their children to fulfill their roles and responsibilities as learners (Epstein 2001:4). The parents emphasise the importance of school, homework completion, and the activities that build academic skills and feelings of success (Barbour et al., 2007 337). Community-minded families and learners help

their neighbourhoods and other families. Schools and communities organise talks, programmes and services that promote the importance of families.

In conclusion, the model of overlapping spheres suggests that mutual interests of families and schools can be successfully promoted by frequent cooperative efforts and clear, close communication between parents and educators through using policies and a comprehensive programme of many important types of parent involvement (Epstein, 2001:29).

2.2.2 Epstein's typology of the school-family-community partnership

Epstein's typology of the school-family-community partnership is a framework that provides six ways of involving parents which teachers may use as guidelines for developing programmes that offer opportunities for family and community participation in their schools. They are based on the theoretical model of overlapping spheres of influence, the first five propositions relate to parent and family involvement while the sixth relates to the collaboration with the community at large. Each of the six types of involvement consists of many activities that promote or enhance partnership. This means that, as they make plans for the upcoming year, the educators could integrate into their educational programs any of these activities. However, Epstein and Sanders (2006:87) warn that each type of involvement poses specific challenges that must be addressed in order for schools to reach out to and become partners with all families, including those whose first language is not English, single-parent families, low income families, and other families with whom schools traditionally have had limited interaction. They further indicate that activities for the six types of involvement lead to different results and challenges for learners, families, schools, and the community. Thus, each school must be aware of the local needs of its families and children while designing its own parent involvement programme (Olsen & Fuller, 2008: 131). Epstein (2008:9) suggested that educators in secondary schools must take responsibility for developing goal-linked partnership programs that reach all families to keep the families involved in spite of the increasing age of the child.

Epstein (2008:11) suggested six types of involvement for secondary schools.

2.2.2.1 Type 1: Parenting

Parenting activities can, for example, help families understand adolescent development, strengthen parenting skills to relate to and support teens, and set home conditions for learning through secondary school. Type 1 activities also help schools understand families' cultures, backgrounds, and goals for their children. Examples include workshops for parents on age appropriate topics of health, nutrition, peer pressure, drug use, and premature sexual behaviour, parent-to-parent forums may help families ease students' transitions from middle level to secondary school.

2.2.2.2 Type 2: Communicating

Communication between the schools and the parents must be in both directions. Two-way communicating activities keep families informed about and involved in school programs and learners' progress. Examples of these include learner-led parent-teacher-learner conferences; information for families on changing report cards; a column for parents' questions and answers in the school newsletter; and principals' breakfasts on key topics, such as university entrance requirements, college and career planning, and learners' progress.

2.2.2.3 Type 3: Volunteering

Activities that facilitate volunteerism improve the recruitment, training, and schedules of volunteer stakeholders at the school or in other locations (e.g. home, business, community) which in turn lead to more support of student activities and school programmes. Activities include scheduling time for parents to talk to learners about their careers, hobbies, and talents, training parents and other volunteers as mentors, tutors, and with special activities and fairs; and identifying parents to serve as neighbourhood representatives, translators, interpreters and fundraisers.

2.2.2.4 Type 4: Learning at home

Learning-at-home activities are designed for learners and their families and are coordinated with the learners' classwork and curricula. Examples include interactive homework designed by teachers that helps learners to discuss their work and ideas with family members, academic and personal goal setting for report cards with input from families on strategies for reaching goals, learner-led home conferences using portfolios of their work, and guidelines for parents for providing home support for learners who need extra help to pass courses.

2.2.2.5 Type 5: Decision-making

Parents must be involved in the decision-making of their children's schools. The decision-making activities include the input of families in developing mission statements and in designing, reviewing, and improving school policies that affect learners and families. Learners and parents should be active participants in school improvement teams, committees, councils, parent-teacher organisations and the like. Examples include parent representatives on the school's action team for partnerships; an active parent organisation; parent and learner representatives on school improvement committees (e.g. curriculum, safety, codes of behaviour, learner parking, partnerships, fundraising, post-secondary planning committees) and giving information to constituents.

2.2.2.6 Type 6: Collaborating with the community

Activities from this category draw upon and coordinate the resources of businesses, cultural, civic, and religious organisations; senior citizens groups; colleges and universities; government agencies; and other associations. The aim is to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and learner learning and development. Other activities in this category enable learners, staff members, and families to become

engaged in community service or projects that contribute to the community. Examples include creating directories that help learners and their families identify after school recreation, tutorial programmes offered by universities and other organisations, health services, and cultural events opportunities.

2.2.3 Comer School Development Model

This School Development Programme (SDP) was developed by child psychiatrist Dr J. P. Comer and his colleagues at the Yale Child Study Centre in collaboration with the New Haven Public Schools, USA. The model is a response to the way that multiple social environments or contexts interact in order to influence the development of children and has become a highly touted model for involving parents and is copied throughout the USA, South Africa, England and other countries (Barbour et al, 2007: 329).

According to Comer (2001:172), in order to realize the full potential of schools and learners, educators must have thorough knowledge of how children develop generally and academically; know how to support that development; be able to engage the families of learners, the institutions and the people in communities in a way that benefits learner growth in school and society.

This programme developed a framework known as the, 'The SDP Framework for Change'. The SDP's motto is 'relationships, relationships, relationships' (Guhn, 2008; 343). Comer (2005:39) explained that this framework is based on the theory that a learner's academic performance, behaviour and preparation for school and life can be greatly improved when the adult stakeholders work together in a respectful, collaborative way in order to create a school climate or culture that supports development, good instruction, and academic learning. Furthermore, he asserts that this conceptual and operational framework creates conditions that allow the adults to support the development of children. Comer saw that children's behaviours are determined by their environment and that they need to have positive interactions in

order to develop physically, socially, and emotionally. The child-centred environment is facilitated through planning and through the collaboration of professionals with the community.

The SDP views parental involvement as the cornerstone for success in developing a school environment that stimulates the total development of its learners (Comer & Joyner, 2004:157). Thus, understanding parents and addressing parent development are also important components of this model seeing that the parents and educators must work together, effortlessly supporting development at home and at school (Comer 2005:40).

Comer (2001:174) also emphasised the school's responsibility to initiate the partnership between school and family: 'The school is the pathway for all children - the only place where a significant number of adults are working with young people in a way that enables them to call on family and community resources in order to support growth systematically and continually'. The SDP framework for change is based on nine elements: three teams or structures, three school operations and three guiding principles.

2.2.3.1 Structures

The three teams guided by the three guiding principles are:

Firstly, the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT), made up of educators, administrators, support staff and parents. This team develops a comprehensive school plan, elicits support for this plan across the entire school community, monitors progress and suggests corrections. It also plans and coordinates all school activities such as curriculum, assessment, and instruction (Berger, 2008:245). Moreover, it sets goals for academic, social and community relations.

The Student and Staff Support Team (SSST) addresses learners and staff problems and manages individual situations. It works to prevent concerns from becoming problems and responds to the issues and needs of individual learners (Berger, 2008:245). This team connects learner services, facilitates the sharing of information and advice, addresses individual learner needs, finds resources outside the school, and develops prevention programmes. The team includes the principal and staff members with expertise such as counsellors, psychologists and nurses.

The Parent Team (PT) involves parents at all levels of the school and integrates the school with the community (Berger, 2008:245). This team develops a year-long school-wide schedule of activities that supports the school's social and academic programmes and creates positive relationships in the school. All events are planned as purposeful parts of the comprehensive school plan, which in turn supports developmental needs (Comer 2001:40). Therefore, the dissonance that disadvantaged learners experience as they attempt to adjust from one environment to the other is reduced (Comer & Joyner, 2004: 157). Together these teams plan and work cooperatively to develop a school climate that nurtures the children.

In order to achieve the high level of parental participation and participation goals three levels were created:

Level 1: Parents provide general support by attending parent-teacher conferences, by monitoring their children's homework, and by supporting fund-raising activities. They participate in school calendar events such as school concerts and awards ceremonies. A large number of parents participate at this level.

Level 2: Parents serve as volunteers in daily school affairs. For example, they can provide office support, go along on field trips, or work as library assistants, serve at the tuck shop and other school events. It is necessary to give these parent volunteers meaningful tasks that they are capable of accomplishing and to place them with

compatible staff members. Comer (2005:39) stated that low-income urban parents need compelling reasons to get involved in their children's schooling.

Level 3: Parents participate in school decision-making by serving on the School Planning Management team or on other school committees. Parent representation in the governance and management of the school should be as broadly based as possible. (Comer 2005:41).

2.2.3.2 School operations

The school planning and management team has to supervise the following three operations:

Firstly, the development of the comprehensive school plan, which includes curriculum, instruction and assessment as well as academic climate goals which are developed to meet measurable academic and social goals and objectives.

The second operation is the SPMT's responsibility to monitor and assess the achievement of these goals and to provide for change when necessary.

Lastly, to organise staff development as needed to achieve goals (Barbour et al, 2007:332).

2.2.3.3 Guiding Principles

The three principles on which the SDP framework is based are consensus, collaboration, and 'no fault' problem solving. These are needed to develop a climate that allows schools, children, and parents to thrive. In using these principles, school personnel and parents can review aims and concerns without blaming or finding fault with each other (Berger 2008: 245).

Consensus allows all stakeholders to engage in a discussion, brainstorming for ideas, and decision-making without requiring a vote that might cause disagreements. It calls for all parties to listen to each other's views and developing empathy for them. Collaboration allows the school, families, and community to move forward in order to develop a viable, responsive environment for children (Berger 2008: 245). Comer (2005:41) emphasised that the educators and parents should work cooperatively with each other and always put the learner's needs above their own.

The third principle – no fault problem solving – means no one party is at fault for any lack of success, but all share in the responsibility to improve (Barbour et al, 2007:332). Parents and teachers should respect and trust each other and refrain from finger pointing. Guhn (2008:343) also explained that the aim of these principles is to prevent a culture of blaming, and instead to concentrate resources available for problem solving, giving everyone a voice in this process. He sums up SDP as the framework which provides clear guidelines at the theoretical level (ecological child development), the structural level (school self-governance) and the behavioural level (principles of communication).

2.2.4 The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model

This model provides a theoretical framework from which to examine predictors of parental involvement. It proposes three major sources for involvement:

- Parents' motivational beliefs which include parental role construction and parental self-efficacy for helping children succeed.
- Parents' perceptions of invitations to involvement, which include general invitations from school and specific invitations from teachers and children.
- Personal life context variables that influence parents' perceptions of the forms and timing of involvement that seem feasible, which includes parents' skills and knowledge as well as time and energy for involvement.

Model Constructs

2.2.4.1 Parents' motivational beliefs

Parental role construction

Parental role construction is defined as parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and the patterns of parental behaviour that follow those beliefs. Role construction is influenced by parents' beliefs about how children develop, about effective child rearing practices, and about what parents should do at home to help children succeed in school (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007:532). Parent role construction is formed socially through interactions with teachers, and or other parents and the parents' own schooling experiences and is therefore, subject to change. In their latest investigation Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005:108) concluded that role construction is a powerful motivator of parents' involvement in their children's education at elementary and secondary levels and across ethnic culture and cultural groups. They also concluded that role construction is influenced by school attributes and well-designed intervention programmes.

Parents' sense of efficacy for helping their child succeed in school

Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief that he or she can act in ways that will produce desired outcomes. It is a significant factor shaping the goals an individual chooses to pursue and his or her level of persistence in working toward those goals (Bandura, 1997 cited in Green et al., 2007: 533). In applying the self-efficacy theory in parental involvement, Green et al (2007: 533) stated that the parents make a decision to be involved based in part on their thinking about the outcomes likely to follow their involvement activities. Self-efficacy is also influenced by personal experiences of success in parental involvement; indirect experience of similar others' successful involvement; verbal persuasion by others of one's capability; and physiological provocation. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005:109) the influences above

suggest strongly that schools and other important role players exert significant influence on the parents' sense of efficacy in helping their children succeed in school.

2.2.4.2 Parents' perceptions of invitations to involvement from others

General school invitations

Acceptable school practices qualities like a welcoming and responsive school atmosphere; keeping the parents well informed about learner progress, school requirements, and school events; conveying respect for and responsiveness to parental questions and suggestions are a manifestation of invitations to family-school partnership. Positive school invitations and a welcoming, trustworthy school climate support parental participation. The school principals must lead by example by creating and maintaining a positive, welcoming climate at the schools.

Specific teacher invitations

Specific invitations to involvement from individual teachers have been identified as powerful motivators of parental involvement. These invitations are a vote of confidence in the value of parents' contribution towards the learner's success by the teacher. Many parents express wishes to know more about how they can be helpful in their children's learning. Developers of varied intervention programmes have reported notable success in increasing the incidence and effectiveness of parents' involvement activities through teachers' invitations to participate in specific involvement activities (Green et al 2007: 533). In addition Deslandes and Bertrand (2005:174) stated that parents identified teacher invitations with parent involvement at school. Thus, in order to improve parent involvement it is important for schools to sensitise parents to their duties and responsibilities.

Specific child invitations

Generally all parents want their children to succeed. Therefore an invitation by the learner to a parent asking for help with schoolwork can be a powerful prompt for parent participation. Specific invitations from children, according to Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005; 111) activate many parents' wishes to be responsive to their children's needs and to be supportive of their educational success. As is true of all types of invitations to involvement, invitations from the child may be increased by school actions that encourage family engagement in children's schooling. In their investigation, Deslandes and Bertrand (2005: 174) concluded that parents' perception of learner invitations in the academic domain made significant contributions to the prediction of parent involvement at home.

2.2.4.3 Parents' perceptions of Life Context Variables

Skills and knowledge for involvement

Skills and knowledge that the parent possesses form a set of personal resources that impact a parent's decisions about varied involvement opportunities. Parents are motivated to engage in involvement activities if they believe that they have the skills and the knowledge that will be helpful in specific domains of involvement activity (Hoover-Dempsey et al 2005).

Time and energy for involvement

Parents' thoughts concerning involvement are also influenced by their perceptions on other demands on their time and energy. These may include other family and work responsibilities. Parents who are over-committed, for example, with multiple child care or extended family responsibilities tend to be less involved in their children's education. Parents who have jobs with inflexible scheduling, who work more than one job, who have unstable jobs and demanding jobs also find it more difficult to participate in their

children's education than parents who have flexible jobs and who have reasonable work hours (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Hoover-Dempsey and her colleague concluded that parents often seek opportunities for involvement that fit within the demands they routinely experience and are consistent with their beliefs about the significance of involvement in their children's education and perceptions of their own ability for helping the child learn. Furthermore, life-context variables may influence the parent's choices and activities related to their children's education as well as limit or enhance the range of involvement options that parents believe they may choose. Consequently, Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005: 123) suggested that schools may take steps to enhance the parents' active role construction and their sense of efficacy for helping children to learn; to enact practices that support school, teacher and learner invitations to involvement; and to adapt involvement requests and suggestions to the circumstances of parents' life contexts.

On the whole this model offers a useful framework for understanding what prompts parents to be involved in their children's learning at school and home. Both forms of involvement were predicted by parents' perceptions of invitations to become involved from others, motivational beliefs, and perceived life contexts, respectively. This model emphasises that the school's social context, especially parents' interpersonal relationships with children and educators, rather than parents' socio-economic status, influence their decisions about becoming involved in their children's education. Therefore, the school's actions may enhance parents' motivation to be involved. At the same time, however, schools' inaction or negative actions may diminish motivation for many parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005: 123).

In conclusion, each one of these models is unique. However, they also share many similarities. They all emphasize the importance of building effective relationships between all stakeholders and the importance of parental and communal involvement to help all secondary school learners succeed. All the models also share the belief that it is the school's responsibility to reach out, initiate and sustain these relationships by

creating a welcoming environment and culture that will encourage and nurture involvement of families and communities on all levels. The models place emphasis on issues sometimes overlooked, for example, understanding the parents, addressing individual parents' needs, respecting cultural differences, sharing power and responsibilities. Finally, all the models encourage the school to provide and to be committed to a comprehensive and goal-linked programme in order to involve parents and the community in their children's education. Epstein and Comer specifically provide examples of this. Comer also provided the implementation guidelines.

While these are just models and while it is true that schools are different and do not fit one model, they still provide a framework which emphasizes the schools' primary responsibility to initiate school-family-community relationships so that learners may succeed in school.

2.3 BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Researchers have noted a number of barriers to involvement. According to Hill and Taylor (2004:164) understanding each community's unique barriers and resources is necessary for establishing and maintaining effective collaboration between families and schools. The school must actively support parent participation in tangible ways but first educators must mediate the barriers to home-school collaboration then take a proactive stance in helping families to become major participants in their children's education (Olsen & Fuller 2008:1999). Below are factors that have been identified as the major barriers to parent involvement.

2.3.1 Communication

Decker et al (2007: 86), like the other authors, found that communication in secondary school tend to be one sided power relationships from school to the family except from conferences. When a family is contacted, it is usually because their child is in trouble. Furthermore, families whose native language is not English or differs from the teacher's

and families' whose literacy skills may be low, may feel inadequate about that or unable to communicate with the teacher.

2.3.2 Resources

In their study on the implementation of collaboration-based programming at their secondary schools, Sanders and Lewis (2005:3) concluded that over half of the schools that did not implement community partnership activities reported not doing so because of difficulties identifying these community partners, time constraints and lack of school leadership. Muscott, Szezesiul, Berk, Staub, Hoover, Perry-Chisholm (2008:7) identified inadequate teacher preparation regarding establishing and sustaining relationships with parents and material resources for engaging parents and pressure from under resourced national and state accountability measures as the major barriers to parent involvement.

While many parents would like to maintain their relationship during the secondary school years, only a small proportion receives guidance from schools on how to help their children. Many parents have many commitments and are finding it difficult to juggle and manage the multiple demands on their time and resources and are put off being involved because of these commitments. These may include issues such as child-care issues, transport difficulties, and in rural areas, large distances to travel to the school, being too busy – not always by choice, but with their work lives.

2.3.3 Beliefs and values

Decker et al (2007:4) found that secondary schools' efforts to improve connections with learners' families and communities were hindered by a prevalent belief among families, educators and administrators that partnerships at the secondary level were unnecessary. In addition Decker et al (2007:4) stated that parents may also encounter a lack of school support for diversity or negative attitudes by school personnel toward families with diverse backgrounds and needs. As a result parents from minority and low

socio-economic backgrounds feel that they have nothing to contribute, as they are stereotyped as less interested in their children's learning.

2.4 BENEFITS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

There is consensus amongst researchers that there is sufficient accumulated data that indicate that parental involvement in children's development and learning, including the out of school dimension, makes a positive difference to children's achievement, and accrues other, related mutual gains and benefits (Wolfendale, 2006:6). In her report on National Network of Partnership Schools, Epstein (2008:10) states that there are benefits from involvement of families in secondary school through partnership programs:

More learners benefit than just those whose families become involved. There is a significant increase in the number of learners that earn higher grades in English and Mathematics, improve their reading and writing skills, set higher aspirations, and come to class more prepared to learn. Furthermore, when schools have programmes and activities to engage families, more parents become involved in useful ways. For example

- When secondary schools conducted workshops on post-secondary planning, more parents responded by discussing higher education opportunities and career plans with their children
- When middle level schools organised interactive homework in science, more families talked with their children about science and learners improved their homework completion and achievement in test scores. In secondary school family involvement in and support of reading is linked to learner success in that subject.

- When educators communicated clearly with families about attendance policies and how attendance affected achievement, schools' average attendance improved and chronic absenteeism declined.
- When teachers and principals communicated with parents about their child's behaviour, the number of disciplinary actions in schools decreased over time.

Sanders and Lewis (2005:1) stated that school-family-community partnerships in secondary schools have been associated with increased learning opportunities for learners and community development; more positive parent attitudes toward school; and the academic success of language minority learners.

In conclusion, these benefits emphasise what the other authors (Comer, 2005; Epstein 2008; and Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005) mentioned in their models in 2.2 that parent involvement has benefits in secondary school and that schools should consciously develop programmes that will nurture and support parents as they become involved in their children's learning.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter was to explore parent involvement in secondary school. The chapter started with a discussion of the two most widely used models of home-school-partnership: Epstein's model and Comer's School Development Programme.

It then proceeded to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model which examines what prompts parents to get involved in their children's education. The chapter has showed the importance of having home-school-community collaboration in secondary school. It was concluded that it is the school's responsibility to create and maintain an environment in which collaboration for learners' success is encouraged and supported. The last sections of the chapter discussed the barriers to and benefits of parent

involvement in secondary school from which it was deduced that the benefits to be achieved from partnership carry more weight than the barriers.

In the next chapter, (Chapter 3) the researcher will discuss the research design of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an account of the design of this study and how it was conducted. It encompasses the aims of the research, the research design and data collection methods that were used in the investigation.

I used a qualitative method of research in order to acquire an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of parent involvement and its effect on the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners, from the perspective of the parents and the teachers. The focus of the study was:

- To identify how the parents are involved in their children's learning and its impact on their academic achievement.
- To explore barriers encountered by parents and how the schools can assist the parents to be effective in their involvement.

To obtain an understanding of the phenomenon of parent involvement, this study undertook a literature search in Chapter 2 as background information on the context in which parents carry out their parental duties towards the education of their children. This research involved three independent schools as partner schools, where the previously disadvantaged learners are placed as recipients of scholarships through a Student Sponsorship Programme (SSP).

As a teacher with eleven years' experience of teaching at an independent school, I observed the differences in educational attainment of learners when there is a noticeable absence of their parents at parents' evenings and other school events. I also observed learners with parents who are involved in their children's school activities.

Learners who had the support of their parents were the ones who were more successful than learners with parents who left all the responsibility of their child's education to the school and the sponsorship programme personnel. As stated in Chapter 1 the aim of this research was to provide SSP coordinators, partner schools and other organisations that sponsor previously disadvantaged learners attending independent schools with information on the importance of parent involvement: this was done by gathering information regarding the experiences of parents and teachers involved in the education of these learners, and sharing the results of this research. Lastly, I hoped that the study will provide suggestions on how the schools can support the parents to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and make their involvement more effective.

I chose a qualitative research approach to study in-depth the experiences of participant parents and the meaning they ascribe to their involvement in their children's learning. I realised that individual qualitative interviews would provide the participants with an opportunity to give an account of their perceptions and experiences and to express themselves in their own language. Furthermore, having experienced the difficulty of trying to get hold of working parents, a qualitative design emerged and the researcher could make decisions about data collection methods as the study progressed. In addition, in qualitative research a researcher is an instrument used to collect data: this was going to afford me an opportunity to learn and construct knowledge that I was going to use as a teacher as well as a parent.

In this chapter, the researcher explores the qualitative approach in detail. The issues of validity, reliability and ethical measures are outlined.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Epistemology and qualitative research

The short definition of epistemology also known as a philosophical view is the theory of knowledge or 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action' (Guba, 1990, cited in Creswell,

2009:6). It is the study of what is required in order to have a rational belief and knowledge on the focus of study. The paradigm of this qualitative research was a phenomenological approach through which I as the researcher attempted to understand the lived experiences of parents as they were involved in their children's learning and how it impacted their children's achievements. The main reason for choosing a qualitative research methodology is that it is consistent with the epistemological position of the research question.

The research question for this study was:

What is, according to parents and teachers, the effect of parent involvement on learners in the SSP and who attend some independent schools in Johannesburg?

As also a teacher and a parent I have my own perception and experiences of parent involvement but in my role as a researcher I had to set aside my experiences and seek to understand the experiences of the parents and SSP coordinators (teachers). Therefore, I made use of an interpretive approach to understand the depth and complexity of individual lived experiences and how participants make sense of these experiences with regard to parent involvement. Moreover, qualitative research is rooted in these two epistemologies.

According to Creswell (2009:4) the qualitative research method is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning each participant, individually or as a group, assigns to a social or human problem. In the same manner, Denzin and Lincoln (2008:4) defined qualitative research as a broad, naturalistic and interpretive approach to the study of social phenomena. As mentioned earlier (3.1) the purpose of this study is to understand the meaning the participants (parents and teachers- as coordinators) assign to parent involvement at three independent schools where learners are placed as recipients of scholarships through a Student Sponsorship Programme.

Over the years different authors (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2003) identified a number of characteristics common to qualitative research. They all agree that qualitative research should be conducted in a natural setting – which is its major characteristic. The researchers go to the participants' everyday world and have face-to-face interaction as they believe that the issue being studied can be understood better when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. Furthermore, the qualitative researcher becomes the primary research instrument that physically goes to the field to gather data through various methods such as examining documents, observing behaviour, or interviewing participants to establish a holistic picture of the phenomenon. In this study I conducted the individual interviews at the participants' homes, their natural settings, and at one of the schools that usually hosts SSP functions so as to not remove the coordinators from their real world which is the school. I also collected data from a number of documents at schools and school websites to ensure validity and to enrich the data collected during interviews rather than relying on a single data source. Each one of the strategies used to collect data made the understanding of parent involvement in their children's learning evident in a different way.

Even though I planned how the data collection stage will proceed and I designed a well-planned framework of semi-structured questions, some of the things did not go as planned for according to the formal interview format. According to Frost (2011:23) the term 'informal interview' refers to unplanned research-relevant conversations that take place and which the researcher applies, observes and indicates in the field notes. I had to restructure the questions when one of the participants fell ill during data capturing, just to mention one. I had to keep an open mind and be flexible by focusing on what was important, which was to make sense of the meaning the participants brought when they were ready. Therefore I had to change and reshape some plans as the study progressed, for example the appointment dates and the duration of the interviews. This meets the criterion of flexibility for a qualitative study. This is also in line with Creswell's (2009:175) view that once the researcher is in the field things might not work as planned, therefore one can change, refine and alter plans in order to gather relevant data.

As a researcher I had to use a theoretical lens through which I had to view, analyse and interpret this study. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed to explore the experiences and perceptions of parents and SSP coordinators regarding parent involvement (Frost et al., 2011:44). Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews enable the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue, modify questions and follow interesting aspects that come up during the interview (Smith 1996). I identified themes that emerged as I wanted to have an in-depth understanding of the realities: I repeatedly checked with the collected data captured from the individual interviews, group discussion, observations and parent involvement-related documents. After which I described my findings which are what I believe the participants' experiences and perspectives of parent involvement and its effect on learners' achievement, as interpretative phenomenological analysis 'is concerned with exploration of personal lived experiences and with how people make sense of their experience' (Frost et al., 2011:53).

According to the characteristics of qualitative research above, I used inductive reasoning in analysing data. I coded data and placed it into categories and themes that emerged. In interpretative phenomenological analysis questions are open and exploratory, designed to focus on exploring participants' accounts and understandings, and should not lead towards particular answers (Frost et al., 2011).

In summary, qualitative research is a method the researcher uses to investigate and gather in-depth understanding of an issue affecting individuals, groups or communities in their normal surroundings.

3.2.2 The researcher's role

As a researcher I played a role as observer and interviewer. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003:8) the researcher has to go out to the field in the people's natural setting in order to gather data by observing, interviewing, and reading documents or by gathering, watching or listening to audio-visual material. In view of this, I visited participants to

conduct semi-structured interviews and also observe the place where the learners study and do their schoolwork. As a qualitative researcher I described and interpreted rather than measuring and predicting.

Throughout the study and especially during the analysis of data I continuously reminded myself that I need to focus on interpreting what the participants said and how they perceived their involvement with their children's school and learning activities and not on my observations and perceptions that I experienced or those that derived from the literature review. This is in line with what Rossman and Rallis (2003:11) stated about the role of a qualitative researcher, that no formal hypotheses are stated prior to the study, although qualitative researchers do bring a conceptual framework and guiding questions that can be – and most often are – changed, modified, and refined once in the field. Even though I had open-ended questions planned before the interview I was open for informal interviews and to prompt participants who are ready to communicate information to the researcher that they think might be relevant to the study (Frost et al., 2011). After the first interview I carefully took note of the development of the interviews and restructured the order of some questions. I also thought carefully about the translated questions where I made use of vernacular with participants who preferred to conduct the interviews in isiZulu and ensured that they had the same meanings as the questions in English.

I consciously made an effort to apply reflexivity by examining how I influenced the study and by remaining as objective as possible and not allowing the way I view the world to affect my research. I could easily have become sympathetic or biased toward parents and act as their spokesperson because I understand where they come from as I am also a parent and from a previously disadvantaged background. This attempt added to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. Furthermore, I used multiple methods to collect data.

Qualitative researchers must ensure that their interpretations are thoughtful and ethical. In interpreting data I attempted to remain as objective as possible by reading the

transcripts thoroughly, putting thought towards own perceptions and adhering to ethical principles in my conduct.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Creswell (2007:118) described data collection as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions. The first activity is finding the site and the individual. In this study I identified the three boys' schools which previously were referred to as partner schools as they are partners with SSP to assist financially disadvantaged learners to attend these independent schools. The individuals involved in the study are the parents of these learners and the SSP coordinators. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the site and the participants.

3.3.1 Purposeful sampling

Babbie (2008:179) describes purposeful sampling as 'a type of nonprobability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be most useful or representative'. He then states that the researcher has to make a decision regarding who or what should be sampled; the form the sample will take; and, the number of people to be sampled as long as that sample leads to greater clarity and to a deepening of the understanding of the study conducted. Since qualitative research is flexible, sampling can change during the course of a study. In this study the researcher purposefully selected three schools that are SSP partners. Furthermore, I used homogeneous sampling in order to facilitate the group discussion: 'With a small number of participants it seems helpful to think in terms of a defined group of participants for whom the research questions will be meaningful' (Frost 2011: 50).

The sample for qualitative research has to be small but the researcher needs to collect extensive information about each participant. In this case, participants were invited to offer richly detailed, first-person accounts of experiences. The most important thing was that the participants can form an understanding of the research problem and central

phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2007: 125). This study included nine parents and four SSP school coordinators. This number of participants is ideal for a focus group, that should not be less than 5. According to Liamputtong, (2011) and other sources focus or discussion groups should be small enough to allow all participants to speak.

3.3.2 The schools

I purposely chose only the boys' schools to have a homogenous sample of parents of boys. Secondly, it is mostly at boys schools where there have been learners who faced suspension from school, or expelled and lost their scholarships because of behavioural problems. This concurs with Babbie (2008:179) who describes purposeful sampling as a type of nonprobability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be most useful or representative. They are all independent boys' schools in the high financial fee structure situated in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg which are predominantly white. All three schools were established by three different churches – Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic Church. Although they are of different denominations, they endorse Christian values as the basis of the schools' vision and mission statements, curriculum, spiritual welfare and worship. The numbers of years the schools have been in existence ranges from sixty to one hundred and ten years.

3.3.3 The Student Sponsorship Programme (SSP)

SSP is a non-profit organisation which started operating in South Africa in 2000. Through an application process the organisation identifies academically distinguished learners from low income families and awards them scholarships to attend some of the best government or independent secondary schools in Gauteng and Eastern Cape for five years. The selection process is based on academic excellence, financial need and leadership potential. The five-year scholarship includes tuition, school uniforms, sports gear, books and educational excursions. The learners start in Grade 8 at these partner schools. The SSP also supports the learners through a mentorship programme by

providing each learner with a mentor who guides the learner. Learners are expected to get good results if they are to remain in the programme. There are about fifteen learners in each partner school and the schools also make a financial contribution towards the learners' schooling.

3.3.4 The participants

The participants were primarily female, with three female educators, a school secretary, eight female parents and one male parent. Only two of the parents are married and unemployed while their husbands work. Seven of the female parents are single parents and in most cases it is the mothers who are responsible and mostly involved in their children's learning. The male participant is also a single parent.

Individual semi-structured, face-to-face interviews and group discussion were conducted to collect data from nine parents and three SSP coordinators.

In each of the three schools an educator is appointed to serve as an SSP coordinator. The coordinators mentioned as their role and responsibilities: the main role of the coordinator is to be a liaison between the SSP, parents, learners and the partner schools where they work. Basically they help the learners and parents to adapt to the new environment, keep parents informed on their children's progress and what is going on at the school, communicate with parents if there is a concern with regard to the learner's academic work or behaviour and conduct administrative work for the SSP. These duties are performed in addition to their duties as teachers at their respective schools. The educators all have an extensive teaching experience that spans over twenty-three years of teaching, and serving as SSP coordinators for more than five years.

The parent participants have children who are recipients of the scholarship at one of the three schools. Their children are in Grade 12 (matric) and have been learners at the partner schools from Grade eight; this is their fifth and last year. All parents are of

African descendent and reside at the neighbouring townships around Johannesburg. One of the criteria for a learner to be considered for the scholarship is financial need – the combined income of the parents should not exceed R200 000.00 per annum.

Tables 3.1 to 3.3 provide information on the parents' background and characteristics.

Table 3.1: Gender, age, educational level, employment, marital status and relationship to learner of parents: School A

PARENTS	SCHOOL A			
Gender	F	F	F	F
Age	47	51	42	64
Parent's education	Grade 10	Grade 10	Matric	Grade 9
Employment	Unemployed	Unemployed	Secretary	Domestic
Marital status	M	S	S	M
Relationship to learner	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother

Table 3.2: Gender, age, educational level, employment, marital status and relationship to learner of parents: School B

PARENTS	SCHOOL B		
Gender	F	F	M
Age	36	42	46
Parent Education	Matric	Teacher's diploma	B.Ed.
Employment	Unemployed	Educator	Educator
Marital status	S	S	S
Relationship to learner	Mother	Mother	Father

Table 3.3: Gender, age, educational level, employment, marital status and relationship to learner of parents: School C

PARENTS	SCHOOL C	
Gender	F	F
Age	47	52
Parent Education	Diploma	Teachers diploma
Employment	Retail	Educator
Marital status	S	S
Relationship to learner	Mother	Mother

The second important activity that Creswell (2009:118) identified that the researcher should undertake is access and rapport. It is imperative that the researcher should gain access and establish rapport with participants so that they will provide quality data. The researcher has to build rapport with the participants, yet remain objective and neutral. I obtained permission from the SSP authorities and the principals of the three schools to conduct the study. Approval to conduct the study was sought and was granted by the Student Sponsorship Programme director. Permission was also obtained from the headmasters of the three partner schools, the SSP coordinators and the participant parents. After that I sent emails to the SSP coordinators explaining the purpose of the study and requesting them to participate and help to identify information rich parents who could participate in the study. The coordinators notified the parents that I would be contacting them and that I would seek their permission to take part in this research. I phoned the parents and explained the purpose of the study and the procedure. Approval forms as participants in this research were sent to the parents using their sons as messengers. I gave parents some time to think about the matter. Thereafter I called them to confirm whether they would be interested in participating in the study. I went over the consent form with them and I answered the questions they raised concerning ethical issues. I also secured an appointment to meet with parents at their homes to conduct the interview.

Although a focus group was planned for teachers and parents, one teacher fell ill and to get the parents together for discussions at a specific time was not achievable. The numbers dropped and a focus group discussion was not possible. According to Liamputtong (2011) a focus group should not consist of less than six members. The data gathering took form of individual interviews with parents individual interviews with parent and group discussions with SSP coordinators (teachers).

3.3.5 Interviewing

In a qualitative interview both the participant and an interviewer actively discuss the issue that is of mutual interest while they exchange views (Marshall & Rossman, 2010:142). The participant reconstructs his or her experiences together with an interviewer. The interviewer has a general plan of how he or she will conduct the interview including the topics to be covered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 406), and a set of questions that might be asked (Babbie, 2008: 312). According to Seidman (2006:9), getting answers to the questions is not the purpose of interviewing but the main reason is to obtain understanding and the concrete details of the lived experience and the meaning the participants make of that experience. He further stated that, through interviews a researcher is able to gain access to the context of peoples' behaviour which leads to understanding why they act as they do. It is for these reasons I decided to use interviews in this investigation.

Different authors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2010) agree that individual interviews are the most widely used strategies and that researchers rely quite extensively on these interviews to collect data in qualitative research. They further concurred that one of the benefits of interviewing is that interviews yield large amounts of data quickly. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (2008: 75) stated that because the goal of interviews is to understand the meaning the participants attach to their experience, it is vital that the researcher establishes rapport with the participants. Moreover, the researcher should make an effort to see the situation from the participants' viewpoint and not superimpose her worldview and preconceptions on the participants. I

consciously made an effort to make the interviews a friendly conversational exchange, especially as I teach some of the participants' children so that the interview should not turn into a parent teacher meeting. Many times I had to restrain myself from my own biases.

In this study I conducted the individual interviews and group discussions to gain an understanding of the experiences of the parents and their involvement in their children's education and the meaning they attached to these experiences.

To achieve this as an interviewer I had to establish a general direction for the conversation before the individual interviews. During each interview I pursued specific topics raised by the participant and let the participants do most of the talking by encouraging elaboration and encouraging them to talk at length. Asking follow-up questions and probing the participant to elaborate is necessary as this adds to the richness of data. I attentively listened as each participant gave an account of their experiences while taking notes where necessary. Marshall and Rossman, (2010:145) state that the attitude the interviewer portrays is very significant; it has to convey to the participant that his or her views with regard to the phenomenon under discussion are valuable and useful. I made attempts not to be biased and probe only those issues that I had an interest in.

As mentioned in 3.2.1, data collection was done by semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 75) interviews that do not follow a definite structure can provide a greater depth of data than structured interviews because they enable the interviewer to understand the complex behaviour of people without imposing or making people fit into a box of preconceived categories.

A list of open-ended questions was designed prior to interviewing, to utilise using rich descriptions of the participants (Maree & van Der Westhuizen 2008). Through open-ended questions the participants are able to express their opinions. I managed to get an overview of how parents are involved in their children's learning at home and at

school and the meaning they attach to their involvement. The open-ended questions were discussed with an expert in parent involvement to improve triangulation and prevent the researcher from biased questions. The questions that were in isiZulu were translated by a professional translator.

Qualitative researchers do not seek to validate any claim about the experiences or the possible meanings, but to explore a more in-depth understanding of these experiences and perspectives of the participants. According to Frost (2011:7) qualitative researchers using phenomenological paradigms 'are not in pursuit of definite truth about experiences'. However, their experiences or perceptions can bring some light and open the discourse for parents and educators in parent involvement.

The first question asks the parent participants their view on their aspirations and expectations they have for their children. The following three questions determine the participants' knowledge of parent involvement, their role on what they as parents are contributing at home and towards school to ensure that their children meet the aspirations and expectations they have set for them and their own personal aspirations. The fifth question inquires how the parents perceive that their involvement affects their children's achievement at school. The following three questions ask about their relationships with their children, teachers and the expectations the teachers have of the parents. The last questions were formulated to determine the barriers if there were any that hindered the parents from being involved in their children's learning and their suggestions on how to overcome the barriers.

In this study I chose to use individual interviews with parents in order to gather detailed accounts of each parent's perceptions and experiences of their involvement in their child's learning and the effect the involvement has on the child's achievement. These interviews were conducted with parents, at their homes. Only two parents requested to have an interview at an alternative venue because of personal reasons. One interview was held at the school and the other at a restaurant.

I made use of phone calls to set up appointments for interviews. The first parent interviewed was a domestic worker. The meeting was arranged to be at her employers' home. I explained to her again the purpose of the study, discussed the ethical issues and made a request to tape record our conversation. Our conversation and the rest of the interview were conducted in isiZulu and English. Although the parent said she understands English, she later admitted to be more comfortable to give detailed information in the vernacular.

Even though I had a general set of questions and decided on a format the interview would follow, in almost every interview the order changed as the situation demanded. In some instances the participants spoke on the subject before I asked the questions. The participants shared their experiences with me spontaneously and indicated the meaning they attach to parent involvement. This happened in both the individual interviews with parents as well as the group discussions with teachers (SSP coordinators). This is in line with the flexible and emergent characteristics of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Rossman and Rallis, 2003).

A group discussion was planned with SSP coordinators at one of the schools. Semi-structured questions were developed to start the conversations. Appointments for the group discussion were arranged by telephone and e-mail to secure a suitable date.

Group discussions allow the interviewer to question a number of individuals systematically and at the same time, as well as to stimulate them to engage in a discussion (Babbie 2008: 315). In a group discussion participants interact with each other and this may result in a wide scope of data being covered. Babbie (2008:316) pointed out that the group 'captures real-life data in a social environment; has flexibility; has speedy results; and is low in cost'. The participants can express their feelings, perceptions and beliefs and be supported by other group members.

The group discussion was held at one of the schools. It was scheduled to start at 14h00 as all three schools finish early on Wednesday as it is a sports day. All participants were

female and did not have responsibilities as coaches of any sports. When the participants arrived, the venue (staff's lounge) was well prepared for the interview. I made introductions, gave the participants name tags, and then we commenced with the discussion. I briefly explained the aim of the study again, the length of the interview; and asked permission to tape record the interview. The participants were reminded about the issue of confidentiality and privacy – that is what was discussed during the interview cannot be discussed with other people. The group interview was semi-structured. I had a list of open-ended questions and pre-planned how the discussion will proceed. The questions were used as guidelines towards a specific point but in some cases I had to follow up on issues that came up and were relevant to the study rather than strictly following the questions as planned.

The first question asked the coordinators to describe their roles as SSP coordinators. In the following two questions they had to explain what they understood about parent involvement and its effect, if any, on learners' achievement. Questions four and five were about the relationship they have with the parents and how they encouraged and assisted them to be involved in their children's learning. Lastly they had to discuss the difficulties encountered by parents that prevent them to be involved in their children's learning.

I initiated the discussion but thereafter let the participants make the major contributions. Throughout the group interview I exercised some degree of control by leading the participants back to the point where they wandered off the point and made sure that all members participated. I audiotaped the interviews and also jotted down notes on some occasions during the interview. The group discussion took approximately one hour forty minutes. After the discussion I listened to the tape and then I transcribed the audiotapes of the discussion.

The reason for using both in-depth individual interviews and the group discussion was for the purpose of confirming data and data completeness (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007: 230). The aim of the research was to study the effect of parent involvement on the

learners' achievement. Since this involvement is a partnership between parents, teachers and the community I thought it was imperative to collect data from the parents who had to give an account of their personal experiences of involvement and also gather data from coordinators who are involved with these parents of SSP learners to express their experiences and perceptions on parent involvement. As mentioned in Chapter 2, different authors (Comer, 2005; Epstein, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey et al 2005) are in agreement that there should be a collaborative partnership between parents and teachers. In summary both methods namely a literature study and an empirical study were used in order to gain a better understanding of the different viewpoints and increase the richness of data on parent involvement.

3.3.6 Policy documents and website information

While all the schools are independent schools and are members of the Independent Schools Association Southern Africa (ISASA) they have to comply with all the relevant legislation of South Africa. These include the South African Schools Act (of 1996), South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, just to mention a few. As stipulated in the SASA (RSA, 1996a, section 23) parents should be involved in the governance of the schools by becoming members of the school governing body. Consequently, the schools operate within the context of the National Department of education. Therefore parents are involved in their children's education by being elected to be members of the Council and Parent Teacher Association (PTA or PA - one of the schools has a PA, not a PTA). The Council is responsible for the governance of the school and the PTA/PA encourages parents to support the school through services like fund-raising and volunteer their time and skills during school events and serving at the tuck shop, swop shop, book room, just to mention a few. Furthermore, in other schools the parents can join the praying parents group which meets once a week at the school and can also become members of the parish at the school. Besides being involved in the above groupings parents are expected to be involved in the school in their individual capacity. ISASA provides its schools with a parents' manual but it is not binding as it was indicated earlier that

though the independent schools can be members of ISASA they are expected to comply with the legislation of the country and the Department of Education.

The Department of Basic Education has on its website a parents' guideline booklet on parent involvement, while some Provincial Education Departments have a code for parents listing what the parents are expected to do with regard to their children's schooling. These include both home-based and school-based forms of involvement like creating a home environment conducive to learning, having regular discussions with their children about general school matters, being actively involved in school activities and school governance structures to mention just a few.

Each of these independent schools has its own policy regarding parent involvement. In fact only one of the schools has a detailed constitution that describes the structure, the powers and purpose of the stakeholders in the school and a charter that sets out the purpose and the core principles of the school. In all schools the information about the Council and PTA/ PA is available at each school's website but it is notable that there is neither mention of daily parent involvement in and support of their children's learning, nor of the structures that are in place to help the parents to undertake this task.

The other documents I reviewed are the learners' progress reports from Grade Eight up to their 2011 Grade Twelve results.

3.4 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it makes use of inductive data analysis, which means that data is organised into units or categories and after that the researcher attempts to find relationships among the categories. Creswell (2007:148) views data analysis as a three-staged process which begins with the researcher preparing and organising data for analysis, after which data is reduced into themes by means of codes and lastly data is presented in the form of a discussion, in figures or tables. In this study the same process was followed to enable the researcher to arrive at

findings. As mentioned above, after conducting the interviews they were transcribed word for word and read several times to make sense of what the participants were saying about their experiences of parent involvement in their children's learning. As I read each sentence I broke it down to find meaning and identify codes using different colours. For example one of the participant's responses on how she is involved in her child's learning was:

At home I always check and force him to go study and cut TV you know. If he is not studying and I check: 'What do you have, do you have anything for homework?'

The researchers' interpretation of what the parent said is that first she is involved in her child's learning at home, because to the parent home-based involvement means: checking whether her child is doing his schoolwork, forcing the child to study, thirdly reducing the amount of time the child spends watching TV, fourthly enquiring about homework. The data that was colour-coded was reduced to 98 codes that were tabulated and read again to find relationships among the codes and then to form groupings. For example three of the above codes can be grouped under one word or theme namely supervision. Having organised the data into codes eleven themes emerged, which were then reduced to four categories or topics that are related to the research question and the sub-questions. Under each category there are themes. For example the first category is: Parents' perspective on their role in their children's education. It has three sub themes, namely supervising homework and monitoring the learner's progress, encouraging and offering support, and relationship between the parents and the coordinators and teachers. However, there was one special case, where a theme was divided into sub-themes for the sake of clarification.

The analysis of data is presented in more detail in Chapter 4.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

There are many perspectives regarding the necessity of validation in qualitative research – definition, terms to describe it and procedures for establishing it (Creswell, 2007:202). According to Creswell (2009:190) qualitative inquirers triangulate among different data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study. In this research triangulation was done to corroborate evidence from different individuals (parents and teachers), types of data (observational field notes and transcriptions from both individual and group interviews), and methods of data collection (documents and interviews). Gibbs (cited in Creswell 2009:190) and several other authors described the two terms qualitative validity and qualitative reliability as: qualitative validity means that the researcher checks the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. For example triangulate, using rich, thick descriptions and member checking just to mention a few. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992:48) qualitative reliability is regarded as ‘a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched; that is a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness in coverage’.

3.5.1 Validity

Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research, and it is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the viewpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Creswell 2009:190).

Triangulate means identifying different data sources of information and then examining evidence from these sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell 2009:190). If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed to add to the validity of the study. In this study my data collection included individual interviews and a group discussion and observation – all conducted in the participants’ natural setting –

and review of relevant school documents that give account of parent involvement in the school. I used these different methods to enlarge the scope of my research and also to help me to find supportive information.

On completion of the interviews and having transcribed the data I used member checking by going over the data that had been transcribed and then sent it to the participants to check if that is what they meant during the interviews. This helped to clear up areas of miscommunication.

In my findings I provided detailed descriptions of the experiences of the parents as they were involved in their children's learning and not generalised interpretations. I suggest the detailed interpretations I provided are relevant and worthwhile and will help the stakeholders and any other person interested in parent involvement in secondary school and will hopefully create opportunities for further studies.

3.5.2 Reliability

Lewis (2009:8) explains that reliability is synonymous with consistency or dependability. This means that research findings can be replicated by another researcher. He further states that a qualitative researcher can enhance reliability by ensuring research worker reliability, and the use of various means of data collection. As mentioned earlier, various data collection methods were used in this study to ensure reliability. I checked transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription by re-reading them quite a number of times. I also provide a reliable detailed description of the participants, the schools and the sponsorship programme.

3.6 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Every scientific research project has to adhere to ethical principles. Ethical issues involve the general agreements shared by researchers about what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific inquiry (Babbie, 2008:478). In this study I had to

take cognisance of the following ethical principles: informed consent procedures and confidentiality towards participants.

3.6.1 Informed consent

As mentioned in 3.4.5 I requested and obtained permission (see Appendix A) to conduct the study and the coordinators identified the participants I could use in the study. I met with participants and informed them about the purpose, about the nature and the consequences of the study and that their participation in the study is voluntary (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 192). The consent forms (see Appendix B) were sent to the parents with a covering letter requesting them to sign to concur that they understood its contents. To accommodate the parents who are not fluent in English I went over the consent form over the phone to make sure they understood its contents, especially explaining issues about anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were reminded that they can at any time withdraw from the study and that there will be no consequences for their action.

3.6.2 Privacy and Confidentiality

The researcher had to assure the participants that the information they provided would be kept confidential and in a safe place. I removed all identifying information like names and location in order to protect the interests of the participants and those of the research sites to ensure that the participants remain anonymous. The three schools in the study are referred to as school A or B or C; none of the schools' names or the participants' names are used. The participants are also referred to as parent from school A or B or C. I did my utmost to make sure that not even the readers of the findings can identify a given response with a given respondent (Babbie, 2008:482). Most of the responses were presented in a generalised form rather than in quotations.

3.6.3 Accuracy

I had to ensure that the data collected is accurate and to guard against fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions and contrivances as these are both non-scientific and unethical (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 194). After transcribing the interviews I made copies and sent them to the participants and I requested them to check my transcripts to make sure that they contain what they said and meant more especially as I had to translate them into English. During the interviews participants were asked to repeat or were probed to give more clarification in some cases to make sure that we are on the same page.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an account of the research design of the study and how a qualitative research paradigm was used to gather the primary data of this research using interviews, observations and reviewing documents and school websites relevant to the study. The researcher also attempted to describe how she fulfilled her role as a research instrument, both as observer and interviewer. A comprehensive account of how the interviews were conducted was given. This is a qualitative research study and the sample was small. A detailed explanation of purposeful sampling was given, to the participants, and the three schools that participated in the investigation and SSP, the organisation that sponsors learners to attend these independent schools. The chapter also presented the aims of the research, and how the research design and data collection methods that were used in the investigation, the research methods employed and how these are consistent with the research question. The ethical measures adopted in this study were also described. A brief explanation on how the data was analysed was given but the next chapter, Chapter 4, will provide details on data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research was to understand the effect of parent involvement on academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners who have since been supported by the SSP programme in independent schools with a high academic standard. A qualitative research design was utilised to explore and to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meaning the parents ascribed to the effect their involvement has on the academic achievement of their children. According to Merriam in Ramroop (2004:57), the goal of qualitative data analysis is: 'To come up with reasonable conclusions and generalisations based on a preponderance of data.' In this research the conclusions will be delimited because the study was conducted in independent partner schools only and with parents whose children are recipients of a scholarship which is limited to a small number of learners from disadvantaged areas.

The study utilised an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. (Frost et al 2011:44). The intent of IPA is to seek insight to the subjective experience and meanings that events and experiences hold for people. IPA draws on the theoretical ideas of phenomenology and hermeneutics and on engagement with subjective experiences and personal accounts of meanings that emerge in the processes of interaction between people. To explore and attempt to understand the personal perceptions of participants (parents and SSP coordinators) and their experiences (as they were involved in the children's learning) the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews after which she explicitly studied and then interpreted the collected data.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the data collected during this investigation which involved three educators (SSP coordinators) and nine parents in three different high-fee independent schools in Johannesburg. Data from the interviews

was supplemented with information from school documents, the schools' websites, and other relevant websites.

4.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned above data was collected at three different schools over a period of three-and-a-half months. It will be noted that out of the nine adult participants there is only one male participant. Unfortunately only one male parent was willing to take part in this research. The reason for this disparity might be that in most cases of single parenthood, fathers do not live with their children.

The qualitative interpretative data analysis tries to establish how participants assign meaning to a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, understandings, values and feelings. It is best to start with an inductive analysis, where the main purpose is, according to Maree and van Der Westhuizen (2008:99) 'To allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in the raw data, without restraints imposed by a more structured theoretical orientation'.

The collected data and the interviews with the participants – either individually or recorded during action group discussions – will now be presented. This chapter contains a discussion of the interpreted data as findings.

4.2.1 Data analysis strategy

Right after the last interview the interviews were transcribed word-for-word. The researcher listened to the tapes for quite a number of times to make sure that the transcription is correct. The transcripts were organised into computer files. The researcher had to call the participants in some cases to get clarification where they didn't understand or where additional information was needed. Hard copies were printed and sent to each participant so that they could check whether what was written is what they meant. To familiarise herself with the data the researcher read the transcripts and

listened to the tape recorded data a number of times. The researcher also went over the research questions and the literature review to revisit the purpose of the study. This helped to identify data that is relevant, adding value to the investigation of the research problem. At the same time as the researcher was reading she was breaking down each sentence in an attempt to understand what the participant was saying with regard to the phenomenon under study. Using different colours the sentences were broken down into 98 codes. The researcher went over the codes again, made a table and tried to find similarities and/or differences between the codes. From this exercise eleven themes emerged. The researcher grouped the themes, checked how they are related to questions that were asked during the interviews and the research questions, then tabulated the themes and found it would be to the benefit of clarity of the research to reduce them from eleven to four themes. Under each theme the emerging categories will be discussed. The following four themes emerged during the process:

- Parents' perspectives on their role in their children's education
- Educators' (SSP coordinators) perspective on the role of parent involvement
- Impact of parents' involvement on the learners' achievements
- Barriers to parent involvement.

4.2.2 An outline of the emerged categories

The data collected during the interviews shed light on a number of factors that relate to the research question. First of all it emerged that both parents and educators understand the importance of parent involvement in children's education and how their involvement affects achievement. As reported in Table 3.1 – Table 3.3 the parent participants come from different walks of life but regardless of these differences they all have aspirations for their children, want their children to succeed and want to be involved in their education even at secondary school. The researcher has been aware that parent involvement means different things to different people. Thus its understanding cannot be the same in different schools.

The discussion will show what the parents understood as their daily role in their children's education and the expectations they have of the teachers and their children. Secondly during the semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews and group discussion it also emerged that the schools expect the parents to be involved in their children's education. Thus the researcher presented data that show the schools' expectations and what the schools are doing to support the parents to perform their task both at home and in school.

Chapter 2 presented a literature study on parent involvement with the intention of achieving the aim of the study. The literature consulted revealed the beneficial effects of parent involvement on learners' achievement even when learners are in secondary school. Also that parent from all walks of life irrespective of their socio-economic status or educational background want to be involved in their children's learning. Thus, the first part of the main question of the study was answered by the literature study. During the interviews with the parents and the group discussion with SSP coordinators it emerged that they are aware of the impact of parent involvement in learners' achievement. Both individual interviews (with parents) and group discussions (with SSP coordinators) contributed to a better understanding of parent involvement between parents of previously disadvantaged learners and independent schools their children attended. For this reason the outcomes will be discussed simultaneously (4.3 – 4.6).

The social, economic and cultural issues are realities that impact all mankind and consequently also the participant parents. Data showing how these factors impact parent involvement will also be presented.

4.3 PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR ROLE IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Within this category three sub-categories regarding how parents are involved in their children's learning both at home and at school will be presented.

All the participants believe that they need to be involved in their children's education even though they are in secondary schools. In most instances there are challenges in terms of not understanding the subjects their children are doing. As indicated in Tables 3.1 to 3.3 some of the parents do not have a matric certificate, yet these parents are determined because they want better education for their children, they also think there is a necessity to be involved in their children's learning. Lastly they feel confident that their involvement is making a difference. This is in line with Henderson et al (2007:115) when he stated that: 'The school-home partnership should be built on the fact that all families, no matter what their income, race, education, language or culture, want their children to do well in school, and can make an important contribution to their children's learning'.

One of the parents in school A stated that:

We always have to direct him whether he is 18 or not so that he gets good marks. It's a different environment where he is, different from ours as parents. Now you just have to be there for them whether they are 18 or 21. Make them just focus and do the right thing.

The quote and other responses from parents suggested the awareness among parents about the importance of being involved in their children's learning. Different parents presented different ways in which they are involved in their children's learning. All parents agreed that parent involvement entails: supporting your child in everything, encouraging him/her so that he/she can succeed, helping the child with homework and being there for him/her. In addition, it appears that they are all frustrated by the fact that they cannot help their children as much as they would like to as the work at secondary school becomes increasingly difficult and this frustration is worse for parents whose children are struggling in certain subjects.

Furthermore all parents indicated that they want their children to succeed and get good results at school. Yet another parent in school A stated that she is involved in her

children's learning, she nags until they become irritated with her but that doesn't stop her from being involved.

In all responses the parents showed that they were aware and they believed that they have a role to play in their children's learning. The analysis of the comments made by the parents calls to mind Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) theory on what motivates parents to be involved in their children's education. They refer to this as the parental role construction which incorporates parents' beliefs about what they should do in relation to their children's education.

During our conversation on the relationships between parents, coordinators and other teachers, a parent indicated how the coordinator assists her in her involvement. She also indicated what the school expects of her. This was her response:

To volunteer here and there but mostly it's in schoolwork. They (teachers) always ask us to give support to our children as parents, as the children should see that we support them.

The parents further explained that they are expected to attend meetings that have been scheduled, to inquire about the progress of their children and to be involved in sporting activities and all other activities their children participate in.

Upon visiting the schools' websites none of the participants mention parents being involved in the decisions that have to do with the classroom and the curriculum except when the parents choose subjects for their children in Grade 9. This is done in consultation with the subject teacher. This is contrary to what Comer (2005:41) suggested, namely that parents should be involved in meaningful tasks, not just to make tea, as one of the coordinators indicated. Similarly Epstein (2007:10) advised that parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socio-economic groups should be sought after and trained to serve as representatives of other families in the schools. This is a vote of

confidence that the parents are competent and that the relationship between the school and them is based on mutual trust.

Sub-conclusion

A closer examination of what the parents said about parent involvement shows that they are involved and they want to be involved in their children's learning but their understanding of the concept is limited. It also emerged that they find it difficult to help their children with their schoolwork because they don't have the expertise. Nagging your children to a point of irritating them is a classic example of how not to be involved in your child's learning. Neither does helping with homework as this means teaching the subject. It is for these reasons that the models of parent involvement suggested that the school should take centre stage, develop programmes and educate the parents on how they can be effectively involved in their children's learning, thus impacting their achievement.

During the interviews and analysis of the data the researcher noticed that there are some commonalities in the way the parents are involved in their children's learning at home. Their involvement at home includes talking about schoolwork, encouraging their children and giving them support and guidance, monitoring their progress, supervising homework, motivating and getting extra help for them like tutors. These forms of involvement are discussed in detail below.

4.3.1 Supervising homework and monitoring progress

Comer (2005:41) refers to this form of parent involvement as level one, which has to be instilled and attained in order to reach a high level of parent participation.

The participants are also involved in their children's learning at home through monitoring their children's homework or studying, and letting their children know about their aspirations and expectations regarding their achievement and future careers. The

parents reinforce the importance of school and try to equip them with tools for success. Epstein (1995:702) refers to this as 'school-like families' whereby parents guide their children to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as learners.

All the schools provided brief information on the school prospectus about homework which included the number of hours the children are expected to spend on their homework and the issue of plagiarism. With regard to parents helping with homework school A's prospectus stated:

It is not our wish that homework should be a burden to you but that you should know what is expected of your son. If it appears that your son is not doing sufficient homework please refer the matter to his Housemaster.

When asked what support they give their children at home, the parents commented: Five parents mentioned that they made sure that their sons do not spend too much time watching TV. One parent said to make sure that her son is not distracted she did not buy him a Blackberry cell phone. All parents agreed that they always ask their children if they do have homework and encourage or instruct them to do their homework. One parent reported that she has a set time that her son shouldn't be doing anything but homework. When their children are doing homework they supervise them and ask them basic questions like 'Tell me what is going on, here on this page?' They would help them if their children requested their help, especially if it was a subject they understand. For the parents who can afford it, they make use of tutors to help their children.

One parent in school A stated:

I tell him to study his books always and I won't accept that he shouldn't do well. I always ask: 'Do you have homework. Do you need a computer?' If he needs the Internet he goes to the office (employers) and works there.

The researcher observed that seven of the learners do their homework in the dining room. Two parents stated that this helps because they can monitor what their sons are doing. Despite the fact that the schools provide consolidation lessons at no cost three parents had organised private tutors for their children. Some parents cited reasons like sports and other cultural activities and issues with transport that prevent their children from benefitting from these lessons. At some point the parents were blaming teachers for not making sure that their children attend the consolidation lessons offered at school and also failing to keep the parents informed about the progress or failure of their sons to attend these extra lessons. Since most of parents find it difficult to help their children with the work they try to provide other resources. One parent in school B stated that she advised her son to identify and ask one of his peers to help him with those areas in his work in which he is not doing well.

Sub-conclusion

From the responses above one can make the assumption that the parents are interested in their children's learning, they are eager to be involved at home mostly by making sure that their children do their schoolwork or complete their homework. This is counter to the popular belief that parent involvement declines in secondary school, which Epstein (2008) challenged as well as supported in her findings. Even though there are limitations like the parent's educational background as they do not possess the skills and knowledge which Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) identified as motivators for involvement. Yet that doesn't stop the parents from devising other means of being somehow involved. Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) refer to this as parent role construction whereby the parents are guided by their beliefs in the way they are involved in their children's education at home without guidance from the school. She further stated that parent role construction is subject to change which means with a deliberate school intervention these parents could be more productive in helping their children at home. As mentioned in Chapter 2 other authors (Comer 2005; Epstein 2008) concur with the notion that it is the responsibility of the school to inform and guide parents on how to help their children succeed.

Furthermore, it emerged that most of these parents are working but they do make time to check on their children's work and those who have skills and knowledge to help do get involved, for example by asking questions. In their model Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) also identified personal life context variables such as having skills, knowledge, time and energy for involvement as the source of motivation for parent involvement in their children's education.

4.3.2 Encouraging and offering support

All parents claimed that one of their important roles is supporting their children – academically, emotionally, in sporting activities, and in all other aspects of their lives. It is important for them to offer support despite the fact that some of them are already eighteen years old. Their offering of support is built on a foundation which is having a good relationship with their children and being there for them. Furthermore, all the parents have aspirations for their children and they want them to succeed at school and in life. Therefore they have to support them to attain these aspirations. In addition, some parents feel it is important for them to support their children during the school change and be there for them as they try to adjust in the school. Parents feel they have to be the voice of reason by reminding their children of the importance of education and working hard, especially as they are on scholarships and are privileged to be rendered this opportunity.

The support they offer includes: attending activities their children partake in and parents-teacher meetings, communicating with the school or respective teachers. At home the parents offer their support by creating an environment that is conducive to their children to succeed by giving their children time to do schoolwork, by being involved in learning problems and knowing that there is a project, its due date and what is needed. Furthermore, the parents agreed that they offer any kind of help that they can give as parents, like offer emotional support, being available to talk, know what the child likes, not being angry and punish him/her when he/she doesn't do well or fails but

rather gives support: 'Because he can see that he has a parent who supports him.'
'Have time with him and know his schedule and where he is lacking.'

One parent in school B remarked:

What the child needs is to support him to get his goals of what he wants to be in life. It is a dream of every parent to see your child succeed and become something else one day.

She later concluded:

Another thing I have started recently it is to get a tutor. It is helping a lot.

The comments above reflect the experiences of most parents who are not experts in the academic world, but are trying to create an environment that encourages learning at home for their children. This supports Comer's SDP model for change (2005:41) where he suggested that teachers and parents should create a climate or culture that supports development and academic learning at home and at school.

Sub-conclusion

As mentioned above most of the parents contended that they cannot help their children with most of the subjects as the work increasingly becomes more difficult but that does not deter them from being involved, for example getting outside help through tutors. They mostly use verbal persuasion by encouraging their children to do well. All the participants stated that they believe whatever they are doing helps their children to succeed at school. This corresponds to Green's et al (2007:533) findings on parents' sense of self-efficacy. She asserted that if parents experience success in parental involvement they are likely to continue helping their children.

4.3.3 Communication with their children and motivation

The basis for communication is having a good relationship. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in addition to specific teacher invitations, Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) asserted that specific child invitations are powerful tools that encourage parents to be involved in their learning. Simon and Epstein (2001) reported that the learner is at the centre and the main actor in learning; the child is the reason why parents and educators communicate. It seems that all the parents have a close relationship with their children and their communication is good. They all agreed that they are able to talk about anything with their children; this includes discussing schoolwork and their social lives. During their conversations they communicate their expectations regarding marks they expect them to attain as they are in matric. Moreover, they encourage their children to do well. One parent honestly admitted that they do fight with her son when he does not comply with her standards for him; sometimes the boy says that she is from the old school of thought but they talk the issues through and stay very close. Three parents reported that they do remind their children regularly about the opportunity they got and the importance of education. This is evidenced by comments such as:

I encourage him and tell him that what he has is an opportunity I did not have. I make myself an example, that he shouldn't be like me but he must set an example for his sister and I tell him that education is very important. I say to him: If you want something you should work hard to get it.

Only one parent commented about the future plans of her son and how she is supporting him to attain these.

To motivate their children, two parents indicated that they set challenges for them and promise them rewards if they attain those marks or show improvement in their schoolwork.

Sub-conclusion

As a whole the comments made by the parents reflected that the parents have good relations with their children which is a prerequisite for a productive conversation, motivating their children to do well at school and encouraging them to do well in sports and in other areas. All parents stated that besides talking or enquiring about schoolwork they frequently say words of encouragement to motivate their children. It seems like the communication between parents mostly revolves around their children's social lives, sports and present academic situation. Parents use different ways to motivate their children.

4.3.4 Relationship between the parents and the coordinators and teachers

Green et al (2007:533) reported in their findings that parents' interpersonal relationships with their children and teachers are the driving force behind their involvement in their children's education. The coordinators reported that they have a decent relationship with the parents and are not aware of anything to the contrary. Furthermore, the parents were also satisfied with the relationship they have with the school. A coordinator from school B stated that it is a relationship of understanding as her school 'bends over backwards to accommodate families'. Parents pointed out that they communicate with the housemasters most of the time and are happy with the relationship. All parents also stated that they feel welcome at the school and appreciate the opportunities the schools offer their children. Having said that, there are, however, individual cases or issues that need to be addressed to assist the relationship between the school and the parents to reach its full potential. These include communication breakdown, parents feeling inferior because of their socio-economic status, parents not being well-informed about their roles and responsibilities, attitudes of some teachers who patronise the parents and make the parents feel less adequate, just to mention a few. These will be discussed under barriers in section 4.6. It is such a pity to see that communication tops the list of barriers to parent involvement as communication is critical to school-family relations and one cannot be effective without the other.

As a whole these comments reflect what most parents think about their relationship with the teachers (coordinators) and schools:

The relationship is ok although we don't speak often as nowadays they use internet to communicate and emails.

I find it sometimes it is very difficult.

Average not perfect.

During our group conversation on how the school supports and builds relationships with the parents in order to encourage them to be involved in their children's learning, the SSP Coordinators reported that they constantly communicate with the parents, assuring the parents that the doors of communication between the teachers and the parents are always open. Two coordinators emphasised that they have a good relationship with the parents and this makes it easy for them to communicate with the parents and the boys.

Sub-conclusion

Most parents are satisfied with the relationship they have with the coordinators and the teachers. The coordinators agree that it is their responsibility to communicate with parents if there is a concern, yet they also encourage parents to be proactive and be involved in school activities. In his SDP model Comer (2005:41) suggested that schools should have teams and one of the three teams is the parent team; the function is to bridge the gap between home and the school. It might benefit the school to expose such material to the PTA/PA.

4.4 EDUCATORS' (SSP COORDINATORS) PERSPECTIVE ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In the group discussion with the SSP coordinators, it was apparent that they all agreed that the parents can be involved in their children's learning by becoming actively involved in the PTA, by communicating with the teachers and by being well informed about what is going on at the school and not relying on their children to pass on the

information, by supporting their kids, by coming to parents' evenings, school events and sports so that their children can see that they are behind them and that they are also interested in their well-being.

One of the SSP coordinators stated the following about her school's expectations of home-based and school-based involvement:

Parental involvement involves a parent being hands on in terms of his/her son's education. Not nose-y and domineering, but informed, and available.

Expectations from parents include moral support, encouragement, participation in school events, and payment of parents' portions of fees.

Later on in the conversation she claimed:

It (parent involvement) is essential for academic performance and ethical behaviour of the boys, important for the boys, for self-image.

They agreed that the parents at home can be involved by helping their children with homework where they can, checking their books – even if they don't understand they can ask questions, they also need to communicate with the teachers and find out or inform teachers about what is going on in their children's lives. In addition all coordinators agreed that they make the parents aware of the importance of their involvement in their children's learning and how it impacts on their achievement and adjustment at the schools.

All coordinators acknowledged that they are aware of a couple of issues like transport, the parents' level of education and social and economic constraints, to mention just a few. These are barriers that cause the parents to be apathetic and not be effectively involved in their children's learning. Nevertheless, they emphasised that the parents need to prioritise their children's education.

Sub-conclusion

The quotations above and the responses given by the coordinators seem to show that the message the SSP coordinators conveyed to the parents about how they can be involved in their children's learning, is mostly at home. This includes giving support to their children, encouraging them, supervision of homework, providing for the needs of the children and payment of school fees. Parents are encouraged by the coordinators to participate in school activities such as attending parents' meetings and sports. They are also informed of the importance of their involvement and its impact in their children's achievement and adjustment at the schools. Yet, no mention was made about the parents being involved in decision-making at the school by being involved in the council or other committees as parent leaders and representatives.

4.4.1 Communication between the coordinators, teachers and parents

As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the responsibilities of an SSP coordinator is to liaise with the parents, the school and SSP personnel. The coordinators agreed that they do communicate and pass on information to the relevant parties but mostly they communicate with the boys more than the parents. At school A, the school secretary has been assigned the duty specifically to communicate with SSP parents because she is multilingual. Another coordinator explained that she has a good relationship with the parents and there is constant communication between her and the parents. At the beginning of the year the coordinators have a meeting with the parents and during the course of the year they communicate by phone, while parents are free to call her if there is a problem. The rest of the coordinators were in agreement with her statement: 'We are always available, and ready to listen.' All coordinators also agreed that they call the parents to remind them about attending meetings, school events, and sports. This is evidenced in this comment made by one of the coordinators:

I do talk to them (parents) I know they are busy during weekends to come to see boys in sports but they have to attend parents' evenings. If

they have problems with transport the school can help. We reimburse them for transport fares. There is no excuse for not coming to parents evening and speech night.

Parents indicated that they communicate with the coordinator if a problem is related to the SSP organisation, but if it is an academically related problem, they communicate with the relevant teachers, the housemaster or the head of academics.

4.4.1.1 Communication through attending parents' evenings

All the models of parent involvement specify an internal structure of personal relationships and exchange of information between and among parents, children, educators and the community. One of the ways to develop and maintain that relationship is through parents' evenings. The school calendars of the three schools indicated that in all three schools parents' evenings are arranged for different grades twice a year. They run from 17h00 in the afternoon until 19h00. The parents get a chance to meet their children's teachers and have a brief discussion with them that can take between 10-20 minutes.

As stated above the coordinators encourage and remind the parents to attend the parents' meetings. In addition to that the school uses all the other modes (sms, school communicator, letters, and notice boards) of communication to inform and remind parents closer to the date about the parents' evenings. All the parents agreed that the coordinators and their school inform them regularly about the importance of attending the parents' evenings and are aware of its impact on their children's learning.

A parent confirmed her attendance and stated her reason for attending parents' evenings as:

If I don't attend the meetings I lose out on some of the things that were discussed and the teachers think I don't care and am not interested. In discussing with them I will get to know what the problem is.

4.4.1.2 Communication with specific teachers

If the parents are not able to attend the parents' evening they can make an arrangement to meet with the teachers on a different date. The parents have access to the Housemasters' phone numbers and email address. They can contact the Housemaster to make an appointment to see him alone or together with the child's subject teachers. Another possibility is to request teachers to forward the parents the comments on their children's progress. One of the parents aptly indicated:

Where I feel the school is not doing what it should do to involve me as a parent I would go to the school and discuss it with them, either with the school teacher or with the SSP coordinator just to find out why? If I'm not happy about something I make them aware that I am not happy about something concerning my child.

Sometimes the parents are invited to a special meeting by the Housemaster and the teachers concerned. This corresponds to Green et al (2007:533) findings that parents are more likely to be involved in their children's learning if they receive specific invitations from teachers. Four parents indicated that they have been invited by respective teachers to discuss some concerns with regard to their children's performance.

Sub-conclusion

It seems as if the coordinators and the parents are in agreement that firstly communication between the teachers and the parents is a necessity. Secondly, attending parents' evenings, specific meetings and other activities the child is involved

in, is necessary and has an impact on the children's learning. There are parents who explained that their relationship with the coordinator and other teachers is fine and they are satisfied with the way it is developing. By contrast, there are parents who have issues with the communication and the relationships they have with the teachers at their schools. The researcher noticed that most communication strategies listed seem to be one-way, that is from the school to the parents. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence stresses that learners benefit most when their families and schools have a good relationship, share a common goal and when they work collaboratively on these goals. In fact many other findings (Comer, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005 Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004) asserted that it is the school's duty to increase the interactions by initiating the partnership through specific invitations to parents and facilitating the collaboration more so now as the parents find themselves less able to help their children with their schoolwork. This will build the parents' confidence or self- efficacy and mostly benefit their children and the school.

In addition, the SASA (1996:13) stipulated that it is the parents' right to have access to information concerning their child. The schools have invested a lot of money and time to make sure that the systems for effective communication from school to home are in place and are continually adding on state of the art means of communication, but the question is: Are these communication avenues accessible, effective and fully utilised?

4.4.2 Volunteering

It is Epstein's (2008:11) view that the notion of volunteering includes parents who come to school to support learners' performances, sports or other events. School A has a PA and school B and school C have PTAs through which parents can be involved as volunteers, for example by helping out at fund raising events, various occasions of a social nature that occur at the schools throughout the year, or serve at the tuck shop just to mention a few. In some cases parents are involved in sporting activities that their sons partake in and offer their services there. Parents can assist in all other areas of the school but not in the classroom. In school A every parent is a member of the PA and

then the parents elect a committee out of which four of its members become ex officio members of the council. Besides posting information about the PA on the school's website, new parents get information about the PA in the school's prospectus also at the beginning of the year at the PA's Annual General Meeting. All parents are invited to attend this meeting. In school A at the parents' evenings parents are reminded of the upcoming events and are requested to volunteer their services.

The composition of the PTA is not exactly the same in each of the two schools. In schools B and C, the parents can volunteer and be elected to be members of the PTA and the chair of the PTA automatically becomes a member of the Council. The members of the PTA include teachers, parents, Old Boys Foundation, and the school Head boy. Out of the three schools only one of schools – school C – has a detailed constitution that explains the composition, the role and responsibilities of the PTA and council.

None of the parents that were participants in the study are members of the PTA or the school council.

All the coordinators stated that they encourage the parents to volunteer their services to the school. One coordinator stated that:

They (parents) may also be involved in PTA so that they can also help. When the child sees his parents involved – maybe making tea for visitors, he becomes encouraged and motivated.

Only two parents mentioned that they are volunteering at the school. One parent showed willingness to help by indicating:

If it is to help out I don't mind because I even put my name on the rugby festival because I would like to be involved. It's a good school and we've enjoyed it. It's been so nice and I am grateful for the opportunity

that they gave my child and I would still like to be involved. If there is anything. I don't mind them calling me and saying: Hey we've got something here, can you help? If I can help, I don't mind at all. I'd be happy to do it.

Other parents have been giving of their time to SSP helping with administration after receiving invitations from the organisation.

Sub-conclusion

The quotations above and comments indicate that most of the parents understand the concept of volunteering and they support it but they will only volunteer their services if they are invited. This corresponds to Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) findings that general school invitations motivate parents to be involved in their children's education. Another reason the parents would volunteer their services is to show gratitude towards the school for offering scholarships to their children. The researcher observed that the participants' understanding of volunteering is limited to helping out at the school social events only. None of the parents mentioned anything with regard to being involved or having interest in being representatives in the decision-making process of the school by becoming a member of the council or any other committee. According to the amendment in SASA made in 2000 (RSA, 2000) it is stipulated that the racial composition of school population should be representative on the school governing body or council which includes co-opting a member who represents the racial and linguistic composition of the learners. This means that these parents can be co-opted to the PTA or School Council.

4.5 IMPACT OF PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT ON LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT

4.5.1 Findings from the literature review

The literature study in Chapter 2 revealed that there are a substantial number of available researches (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Epstein, 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002 Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004b) that attests to benefits which learners, parents and teachers can derive from parent involvement. These include: the number of learners who get higher marks in English and Mathematics increases, the learners' reading and writing skills improve, the learners set higher aspirations for themselves regarding their present studies and their future, their attendance at school improves, more stay in school. Rather than drop out, they come to class well prepared to learn; and, tend to behave well or have fewer behavioural problems. Furthermore, when schools have programmes and activities to engage families, more parents become involved in useful ways (Epstein, 2008:10). In addition, Sanders and Lewis (2005:1) stated that school-family-community partnerships in secondary schools have been associated with increased learning opportunities for learners and community development, the parents tend to have a more positive attitude towards school, minority learners do well academically and their knowledge of success of languages improve, and, there are fewer incidents of learners' maladaptive behaviours. When secondary schools conducted workshops on post-secondary planning, more parents responded by discussing college and career plans with their teenage sons and daughters (Epstein, 2008:10). The findings above present both the direct and the indirect impact that parent involvement has on the achievement of a secondary school learner.

4.5.2 Findings from the interviews

My research results confirmed the findings of other research from the literature review according to the impact of parent involvement on the learners' achievement.

4.5.2.1 Parents' high expectations

As I mentioned in Chapter 1 the Student Sponsorship Programme accepts the learners on the basis of their academic performance and financial need. The rules are clearly stipulated that the learners should maintain the high standards or at least get good marks. It can be expected then that the parents always have high expectations for their children. All parents expressed that they have high expectations for their children and have clearly communicated these to the children. These expectations include getting distinctions in some subjects.

This is evident from the comment made by one parent:

I think maybe I expected more. They have given him an opportunity. I thought he can grab it and use it but the marks were not what I expected but I'm just hoping he will improve at the end of the day and maybe get good marks. I expected four distinctions.

It also emerged that based on what they know about their children and previous academic achievement; four parents stated that their children were chosen because they are intelligent. Therefore, they expect more from them. One parent stated that her son knows that she will be upset if he does not get the marks she expects from him, so he starts negotiating before the report gets home and explains why he did not do well and what he is going to do to raise his marks. As I mentioned in 4.3.3, parents motivate, support and encourage their children to work hard and to persevere in order to meet the schools' and their own expectations. This agrees with findings from other studies on parent involvement in secondary schools (Catsambis, 2001; Epstein, 2008) that if parents have high expectations for their children, this could encourage the learners to set higher aspirations for themselves.

4.5.2.2 Parents' relationship with their children

All parents agreed that they have a good relationship with their children that enable them to communicate openly with them about academic work as well as their social lives. They discuss the problems their children have at school and try to find solutions befitting the problems, the goals their children have, their aspirations and future plans about their careers and what they want to achieve. All parents also agreed that after receiving report cards from school, they discuss the results and the problems their children encountered with the children. They support their children by constantly encouraging them not to lose hope and reminding them to attend extra/consolidation classes and emphasizing the importance of education. Parents stated that their children's work ethics and marks improved after they had a heart-to-heart talk with them. One of the coordinators supported this during the group discussion by giving an account of one of the most recent cases whereby she phoned the parents about their son's poor results. The parents responded and reported that they spoke to their son and the following term, the boys' marks improved.

4.5.2.3 Communication

In addition, both the parents and the coordinators acknowledged the importance of communication of for example, parents attending the parents' evenings where together they discuss the learner's progress, learning problems and solutions. The coordinators not only encourage parents to attend but expect them to come to these meetings. One of the parents had the following to say about attending parents' evening:

So that they could discuss the problems they have at school otherwise I miss things out and shift the blame from myself to the teachers or somebody else whereas when I am involved I get to know what is expected of me as a parent from teachers.

Much as the parents are not pleased that in many instances they only get to know about the problems at the parents evenings, if well-handled, this becomes a platform for further effective communication between the teachers. This benefits the child. Both the teacher and the parent will identify and work collaboratively to deal with the problem(s) the child has and find solutions together. Four parents reported that they communicate with teachers to get to the bottom of the problem why their children are not doing well in certain subjects. Epstein (2008:10) concurs, stating that these discussions are essential as the teachers can use this opportunity to guide the parents on how to discuss homework with their children and a number of disciplinary problems will be reduced.

4.5.2.4. Monitoring and supervising homework

Parents agree that even the low level of involvement like supervising homework and controlling the watching of TV, has an impact on their children's achievement. One parent reported that her son was doing well in junior secondary classes. During Grade 11 she did not have much time for him and his marks dropped because he was not doing his homework. It emerged that even though the learners are in matric the parents felt they need to supervise them. One parent stated that she nags, yet another said she forces her son to sit and do his homework, the other parents said they always ask questions about homework. Moreover, they create an environment at home that is conducive to learning. One parent said she gives her son time to do his work, others provide the resources their children need, like access to computers and the internet. These parents believed that their involvement might not have a direct impact like raising marks as they cannot help with homework in most subjects because they don't have the expertise. However, their involvement will impact the child emotionally, his work ethics and his self-esteem. The coordinator concurred, saying that:

It is essential for the academic performance and ethical behaviour of the boys; important also for the boy's self-image.

The parents and the coordinators agree that the child will have confidence because he knows that his parents support him, are there for him and are interested in his learning and his well-being and they want him to do well. These will be his motivations to do better.

Yet another parent supported this, saying that spending enough time in helping his son with his homework has improved his reading, and the other subject he was struggling with. This corresponds to Epstein's findings (2008:10) that parents' involvement in and support of reading is linked to the learner's success in that subject.

One parent reported that they are involved in their child's learning because it makes him stay focused on his work and not get bad marks.

4.5.3 Findings from documents

The learners' matric results at the end of the year (2011) indicated that all learners passed matric, seven qualified for a Bachelor's studies which mean they will be able to pursue their studies at a university. Two achieved senior certificate pass. There was one case that caught the researcher's attention, where the learners' performance dropped by ten per cent compared to his Grade 8 marks. This is the learner whose mother focused more on the barriers that prevented her from being involved in her child's learning. In our conversation she never mentioned anything concrete that she does to be involved in her son's learning. When the researcher met the family in January 2012 both parents were unaware of their son's future plans for tertiary education. I also met the other parent who mentioned that her son wanted to be an engineer. He got three distinctions. She happily told me that in two weeks' time she would be attending a parent's information meeting at her son's university. There was an improvement in one of the learners' Mathematics mark whose mother got him a tutor although he did not do well in the other subjects. The learners who achieved better Grade Twelve results were the learners whose parents were able to list things they

were doing to be involved in their children's learning. Three of the learners obtained three distinctions each.

Sub-conclusion

The positive effect of parent involvement on learners' achievement has been confirmed by many studies. There is evidence from different studies to support that these positive effects are apparent even at secondary school.

From the study it emerged that parents believe that their involvement in their children's education does have an impact on their academic achievement. Some effects are direct and some are indirect. Some parents confirmed that there was evidence of: getting a tutor to help their children, arranging for a friend to help their children in a specific problem area. One parent confirmed an improvement in her son's reading because she spent more time helping him with homework. Two parents saw an improvement in their sons' marks after providing extrinsic motivation in the form of rewards. One parent offered money, the other parent offered her son a cell phone. All the parents concurred that having a good relationship with their sons is a foundation that enables them to discuss schoolwork with their children, talk about their problems, and try to find solutions, motivate, encourage and nag (only one parent). They believe all this has had an impact on their children's achievement.

Parents also stated that their children have the ability to do well, thus they have high expectations for them and have articulated this to their children. The assumption is that parents' high expectations inspire their children to have aspirations themselves.

All parents believe that monitoring and supervising homework has a direct effect on achievement as the homework enables reinforcing skills that were learnt in class. It seems like the learners who had parents who were hands-on and making effort to be involved in their children's learning got better results.

4.6 BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A growing body of literature (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Epstein, 2008) documents how imperative it is to have a collaborative relationship between the school and the families and its impact on learning and making the school programmes effective. In her model of overlapping spheres, Epstein (2005) suggested that the school, family and the community can be drawn together because of their mutual interests and these interests can be promoted by schools' programmes and the teachers' actions. She further stated that school, family and the community can be pulled apart, resulting in the lack of parent involvement. Lack of parent involvement in secondary school is well documented and is attributed to various reasons, such as ineffective communication, lack of resources, educators' and parents' beliefs and attitudes and values. These are some of the commonly cited barriers to an effective partnership. If we take a closer look at the parents' responses, a pattern emerges: some of these factors are the result of the parents' ideas on parent involvement. On the other hand there are barriers that are caused by the school's limited knowledge of parent involvement. The barriers that emerged will be briefly discussed below.

4.6.1 Ineffective Communication

As mentioned above quite a number of means of communication are used by the schools to pass on information or messages from the school to the parents. In spite of this, quite a number of parents are not happy with communication for various reasons. Some of the barriers that emerged were: times when the parents' evenings take place are too late for SSP parents, there was no collaborative relationship between school and parents, informing parents about events at short notice, means of communication not suitable for some parents, no follow up or feedback from the teachers after raising a concern regarding learners' non-performance.

4.6.1.1 Parents' evenings and school events not practical

It appears that a significant reason for parents' failure to attend parents' evenings and other school events is the time at which they take place, which impacts on the availability of transport. All the parents are aware and acknowledge the importance of attending parents' information evenings and other school events but they are not happy about the fact that the meetings and majority of the school events take place in the evenings. They are aware that this seems to be the best time for the majority of parents but for them it is a problem as they live far from the schools and have problems with travelling in the evenings because of safety. By the time the event finishes they encounter problems with obtaining public transport. The three schools are situated in Johannesburg's northern suburbs and most of the parents live in the townships that are situated on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

There are barriers school functions take place in the evening all the time. I stay in the township and the school is in the north of Johannesburg. The meetings are always at 6 and are not conducive for me to attend them. When I don't have transport I don't go. It's convenient for a majority of parents but for us who live far we can't. Another barrier is the number of functions they have. There is always dinner for this, dinner for that and they always have to do with fundraising money (we have to pay). I cannot keep up.

One parent's concern with time was that the school calls to remind or inform them about the meeting on the day of the meeting. This doesn't help as they need to first organise transport and they also have other commitments. This is contrary to the coordinators' claim that they do inform the parents about what is going on at the school and in spite of the parents often having access to the information through various mediums.

Another parent was not happy with the school's using emails to communicate with the parents. As a result she cannot get hold of teachers because she doesn't have access

to and has no knowledge about computers. The means of communication that works for her is the phone but she cannot call the respective teacher as the teachers' home or cell numbers are not available to parents.

Another parent complained about children being used as messengers as the parents never get the message.

4.6.1.2 Teachers not providing follow up and feedback

Furthermore, one parent stated that she feels that the teachers are not concerned about them. They do not follow things up. If the parents do not attend the parents evening, no one from the school calls to inquire about their absence. Needless to say that the teachers do not forward the parents' information they would have shared with them had they attended the parents' evening. Secondly the teachers do not communicate concerns regarding their children's performance with them early enough. Three parents complained that they only got to know about their children's non-performance during parents meetings or when the problem was out of hand. To compound the matter 'they just dropped the bomb' as one of the parents aptly puts it and did not further communicate with the parents regarding the actions that have been taken to remedy the situation. In addition to that, the teachers do not engage the parents nor invite them to make an input when there is a concern with their children's academic progress; communication seems to be one-way, from the teachers to the parents.

Sub-conclusion

A number of models (Comer, 2005; Epstein 2005; Swap 1992) report that a good relationship between the school and the parents is a foundation for effective communication. The relationship is marked by the teachers and parents having respect for each other's contribution and capabilities, handling conflict without fault finding and treating each other as co-equals. It emerged from the conversation with the parents that they blame the teachers for ineffective communication. Furthermore, it leads to the

conclusion that in spite of the availability of the other numerous modes of communication at their schools; some teachers choose not to use them as one would expect to communicate with parents. They rather wait until the day of the parents' evening to inform the parents about their concerns. Secondly they reflect that teachers tend to communicate only bad news to the parents. None of the parents mentioned that the teachers praised them for their efforts.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 one of the reasons the researcher decided on conducting this research was the noticeable absence of the SSP parents at parents meetings and school events. Yet, all the parents are in agreement that consulting with the teachers at parents' evenings in order to inquire about their children's progress is vital. However, in practice this is not the case.

It is noteworthy that schools A and B have started to provide transport fares for the parents to encourage them to attend parents' evenings and call them on the day to remind them about the meeting. It would seem that this a temporary solution because during the interviews with parents it transpired that besides financial challenges, distance and time are some of the other reasons that were cited by parents for not attending the parents' meetings. Furthermore, these models suggested that schools must be cognisant of the fact that there are also parents from diverse cultural backgrounds and whose mother tongue is not English. The researcher also observed that out of the three schools only one school uses English, isiZulu and Sotho on its electronic notice boards to communicate with parents.

4.6.2 Lack of resources

4.6.2.1 Financial means

As mentioned above SSP was created to give an opportunity to previously disadvantaged learners to attend the prestigious schools. Background information tables in Chapter 3 indicated that some of the parents are unemployed or do not have

high paying jobs. Consequently, this has an impact on the parents and the resources they have at their disposal to support their children's education. Most parents cited their financial situation as having negative consequences as it hampers their ability to support their children's learning since they cannot provide the resources that are necessary in learning such as access to the internet, own transport to attend parents' meetings and other school events and money to spend at social or fundraising events. During our conversation with this mother from school B she reported that:

I can't provide these things (internet, computer). This disadvantages him.

Three parents felt that their socio-economic status has wide-reaching effects. It not only affects learning and their children's academic achievement but it also has consequences for the parents' involvement at the school as they feel there isn't much they could contribute to the school.

4.6.2.2 Problems with transport

Parents' socio-economic status hinders them from attending parents' evenings, and other school activities whereby their children are participating as most of them take place in the evenings.

The Coordinator from school C agreed regarding the issue of transport:

Mostly it's the issue of transport because some of these things like academic things and the other things happen at night and then the parent who comes mostly from the township most of them are immobile they don't have cars so that becomes a stumbling block for a parent to become involved in the progress of their children.

One parent reported that it is not only the evening events that are affected by unavailability of transport. For example, she couldn't make it to her son's induction. She

left home at 6 o'clock in the morning and by the time she got to school at 8h30 the event was over.

However, having said this, the schools and the SSP organisation are aware and acknowledge that this is a problem and to some extent the schools are making provision to assist the parents that are facing these challenges. One of the parents explained that she was assisted by the Headmaster of her school with transport on two separate occasions as she did not have transport from her son's school to the taxi rank after attending the parents' evening and another school event.

Some parents do not attend parents' evenings and other school activities without real excuses.

On the other hand lack of resources not only affects parents but also the learners as they have to deal with issues of the distance that they have to travel to and from school. One of the parents in the east of Johannesburg stated that her son has to wake up as early as 4h30 in the morning because of the distance and the fact that they use public transport and come back home very late in the evening. The other parents complained that their children walk long distances as there is no public transport in the suburb where the school is located. This has a domino effect as the learners come back late from school thus, the parents have little time to spend with them and help with homework as they come home tired especially if they had been playing sports.

This is contrary to Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) findings which stated that parent involvement is motivated primarily by the relationships parents have with their children and teachers rather than by their socio-economic status.

4.6.2.3 Poor educational background of parents

All parents do not feel confident about their ability to help their children with homework as the work in secondary schools becomes increasingly difficult. Some of the problems

cited by the parents are that they do not understand the OBE education system, some of them did not even get to matric, therefore it's impractical for them to help a child who is in matric and is feeling side-lined because of his/her educational background.

These comments reflect the experiences of most families regardless of where they come from in the world and their educational background or socio-economic status. As mentioned in the Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) theoretical model of parental involvement this is role construction, parents feel that they have a role to play in their children's education; therefore they help them with their schoolwork regardless of their educational background. When it comes to homework the wires are crossed because parents think they are expected to teach their children whereas teachers expect them to supervise and make sure that their children complete their homework. It seems as if the teachers also contribute to the confusion by not clearly communicating their expectations to the parents regarding homework completion.

4.6.3 Teachers' attitudes and parents' attitudes

All the models of parent involvement emphasised that the basis for good communication is having a relationship. Henderson et al (2007:27) reported that educators and parents have many beliefs, attitudes and fears about each other that prevent them from working with each other to promote learning and their children's achievement. Making his point Comer (2005) stated that 'it is about relationships, relationships, relationships.' From the interviews it also emerged that in all three schools there are teachers who come across as having a discriminatory attitude towards the parents or are unfriendly. Although they may not verbalise it, their body language conveys that message to the parents. These occurrences are encountered especially when parents have to question them about the reasons why their children are not doing well. Another barrier is lack of respect and cultural differences. Two parents indicated that they were not happy with the way some teachers spoke to them furthermore they get irritated when the parents asked questions. Other parents were concerned about the teacher's lack of understanding their culture as a result they don't share some of their concerns with the teachers:

All I am trying to say is I don't think these schools understand an African kind of family, that we do things differently and they want to do things the Western way which I think is not fair.

On the other hand, there are parents who for some reason have developed an attitude towards some teachers and the school. It is noteworthy to say that mostly these are the parents who are frustrated by their children's results and lack of communication between them and the teacher concerned. They feel they need to assist their child in improving his marks more especially now as he is in matric but the teachers are not making it easy because of their attitudes.

A mother whose son is not doing well in some subjects stated that:

As a parent you ask: 'What can we do?' They never get in touch with us just to ask us that. We have never tried to ask what should we do but we know we should go and ask. As long as he goes to school and get what he can get its fine.

Another parent reported that she got a tutor to help her son and she requested the subject teacher to communicate with the tutor or her regarding where her son is lacking but the teacher never did.

In both cases the parents articulated that they are despondent and feel that the teachers do not appreciate their input and do not treat them as co-educators of their children or provide adequate support to them.

4.6.4. Parents not informed on how to help their children

With a closer examination of the interviews it is evident that a great deal of work needs to be done towards assistance of parents who seek guidance to know how to be involved in their children's education. They have aspirations for their children, yet they

do not see these coming to fruition. This is reflected in the comments made by these parents:

For me I don't have a problem of being involved in my children's learning I will nag and nag until they became irritated with me.

As parents we talk: 'How do you do it?' because when the child comes home he is dragging himself and says: 'Mama I am so tired' and you can also see that he is really tired and we are expecting that he must do his homework and he still needs to attend the tutor and produce good work.

One of the SSP coordinators reported that at her school some parents think that their children will be able maintain the high grades they used to get at their previous schools and some think that their children will be even better but having said that the academic standards are different. This affects their spirit and the aspirations and the morale of the parents and the parents become discouraged

It is a fact that some of the learners do not do well, which is the motivation behind conducting this research and the parents are concerned about it.

Sub-conclusion

As mentioned in Chapter 2 many research studies have identified a number of barriers to involvement. Most of these were mentioned in this chapter but some are unique to each school. Each school therefore has an obligation to understand and deal with the barriers in order to maintain effective collaboration between the teachers and these parents. One of the criteria for one to qualify to be offered the scholarship is financial need. Three of the parents are unemployed one is a domestic worker, most of the school necessities are covered by the SSP but the rest of the expenses have to be paid for by the parents. All the parents confirmed that they were unable to meet all the financial demands like providing a computer, internet and all other school events that

need to be paid for. As a result they feel that their children are disadvantaged. Because of a financial need most parents don't have transport to attend parents' evenings and other school events and other teachers interpret their absence as that these parents are not interested in their children's education. Six of the parents have no access to computers and can't use them thus have problems with communication as it is conducted through emails or through a computer programme called school communicator. Parents are also concerned that they cannot help their children with homework as they do not understand the subjects. Three of the parents reported that they did not get to matric. A closer look at the collected data reveals that the parents are putting unnecessary pressure on themselves in terms of helping their children with homework because they don't understand their role in parent involvement.

Like all other parents, these parents have high aspirations and they want their children to do well. Therefore they are doing what they know to help their children. There is also pressure that their children could lose the scholarship if they do not do well. It seems as if the teachers do not keep the parents informed by giving them feedback on the child's progress once their child has been advised to attend these classes and whether he is attending or not. This worries the parents, especially if they see no improvement in the child's marks.

4.6.5 Coordinators' workload

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the SSP coordinators, in addition to their roles and responsibilities as SSP coordinators, are first and foremost teachers employed by their schools. They are expected to teach, do preparation, plan and conduct assessments, just to mention a few. Having to juggle all these responsibilities is not easy. As a result something suffers. When asked about their responsibilities, their frustration is evident by a comment such as this one:

Labour intensive

To reduce the workload of the coordinator at school A the school receptionist also acts as an assistant of the coordinator by liaising with the parents. The coordinator confirmed that besides reducing the workload the receptionist also comes from the township and is previously disadvantaged and this places her in a position to deal with the challenges that the parents face. As she understands their culture and the languages they speak the parents might find it easy to communicate with her.

In their study Lemmer and van Wyk (2004) reported that effective communication with families is very demanding and consumes the teachers' time. The schools have to revisit how they can help the coordinators and the teachers to develop a healthy working relationship with parents without adding more stress to their workload.

Sub- conclusion

From the comments and quotes above it is evident that the coordinators are having a difficult time to perform their school duties and being SSP coordinators. This affects mostly their capacity to be in constant communication with the parents and keep up with all the issues affecting the children.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that the parents are involved, believe that they have to be involved and want to be involved in their children's learning as they are positive that their involvement has an effect on their children's learning. Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) refers to this as a self-efficacy theory which suggests that parents make decisions to be involved in their children's learning based in part on their thinking that the outcome of their involvement will yield positive results. This runs counter to the popular belief that parent involvement declines in secondary school, and the assumption made by some teachers that the fact that these parents do not come to parents' evenings is an indication that they are not interested in their children's learning. Epstein (2008) as well as Catsambis (2001) and Comer's (2005) research also

mirrored the findings in this study that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are involved in their children's learning even in secondary schools. These authors challenged both assumptions that parents from low socio-economic background are less involved in their children's learning and that parents are less involved in secondary school and both assumptions are contrary to their findings.

Evidence in the study suggests that the parents' involvement is mostly home-based. This includes talking about schoolwork, encouraging their children and giving them support and guidance, monitoring their progress, supervising homework and time spent watching TV, motivating and getting extra help such as tutors for them and setting high expectations for their children. In addition to these, the parents attend parents' evenings, school activities and sports and volunteer their services when invited to. This is the evidence that their understanding of the concept of parent involvement is limited. The parents communicated that they were doing what the coordinators and the teachers told them to do. All parents believed that their involvement especially monitoring and supervising homework has a direct effect on achievement as the homework enables to reinforce skills that were learnt in class.

The parents indicated that they do want to be involved in other areas of the school even though there are limitations such as the parent's educational background as they do not possess the skills and knowledge which Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) referred to as parent role construction and identified as motivators for involvement. Yet, that doesn't stop the parents from making other means of being somehow involved.

Furthermore, it emerged that most of the parents are working but they do make time to check on their children's work and those who have skills and knowledge to help do get involved for example by asking questions and offering necessary resources. In their models Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) and Epstein (2008) also identified personal life context variables such as having skills and knowledge for involvement and time and energy for involvement as the source of motivation for parent involvement in their children's education.

Personal accounts by the parents reflected that they have good relations with their children. These are a prerequisite for productive conversations and motivating their children to do well at school and encouraging them to do well in sports and in other areas. Some parents were already engaging their children about their future – university applications and future careers.

Most parents are satisfied with the relationship they have with the coordinators and the teachers. The coordinators agree that it is their responsibility to communicate with parents if there is a concern. They also encourage parents to be proactive and be involved in school activities. In his SDP model Comer (2005:41) suggested that schools should have teams. One of the three teams is the parent team, whose function is to bridge the gap between home and the school.

There are parents who explained that their relationship with the coordinator and other teachers is fine and that they are satisfied with communication. In contrast, there are parents who have issues with the communication and the relationships they have with the teachers at their schools. The researcher noticed that most communication taking place between the teachers and the parents seems to be one-way, that is from the teachers to the parents. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence stresses that learners benefit most when their families and schools have a good relationship, share a common goal and when they work collaboratively on these goals. In fact many other findings (Comer, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005; Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004) asserted that it is the school's duty to increase the interactions by initiating the partnership through specific invitations to parents and facilitating the collaboration more so now as the parents find themselves less able to help their children with their schoolwork. This will build the parents' confidence or self-efficacy and mostly benefit their children and the school. Findings from different studies (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005; Epstein, 2008) exploring what motivates parents to be involved in their children's learning revealed that the home- and school-based involvement of parents is motivated mostly by specific invitations from teachers. As mentioned earlier, the teachers have a

vital role to initiate and maintain the school-home relationship by communicating – specifically listening to what the parents have to say about their children, their aspirations, concerns and views and treat them as partners.

It seems as if the coordinators and the parents agree that firstly communication between the teachers and the parents is a necessity. Secondly, attending parents' evenings, specific meetings and other activities the child is involved in is important and has an impact on the children's learning.

In addition, the study revealed that most parents understand the concept of volunteering and they support it but they will only volunteer their services if they are invited. The researcher observed that the participants' understanding of volunteering is limited to helping out at the school social events. None of the parents mentioned anything with regard to being involved or having interest in being representatives in decision-making process of the school by becoming a member of the council or any other decision-making body like PTA/PA. The amendment in SASA made in 2000 (RSA2000) stipulated that the racial composition of the school population should be represented on the school governing body or council which includes co-opting a member who represents the racial and linguistic composition of the learners. This means that these parents can be co-opted to the PTA or school council.

The literature supports the evidence in this study that indicates the positive effect parent involvement has on learner achievement. From the study it emerged that parents believe that their involvement in their children's education does have an impact on their academic achievement. Some effects are direct and some are indirect. Some parents confirmed that there was evidence of direct effects when they got a tutor to help their children or arranged for a friend to help their children on a specific problem area. One parent confirmed an improvement in her son's reading because she spent more time helping him with homework. Two parents saw an improvement in their sons' marks after providing extrinsic motivation in the form of rewards. All the parents agreed that having a good relationship with their sons is a foundation that enables them to discuss schoolwork with their children, talk about their problems, and try to find solutions,

motivate, encourage and nag. They believe all this has had an impact on their children's achievement. Parents also stated that their children have the ability to do well. Consequently they have high expectations for them and have made these known to them. The assumption is that parents' high expectations inspire their children to have high aspirations themselves. All the learners passed their Grade Twelve; seven obtained a bachelor's pass and two a senior certificate. It cannot be denied that there may be other factors at play, but the learners whose parents were able to give an account of how they are involved and have been in constant communication with teachers following up their children's progress, are the ones who performed much better.

Furthermore, this study highlights a number of challenges that impacted parents' involvement. A number of models (Epstein 2005, Comer 2005, Swap 1992) report that a good relationship marked by the teachers and parents having respect for each other's contribution and capabilities, handling conflict without fault finding and treating each other as co-equals is a necessity for communication. It emerged from the conversation with the parents that some parents blame the teachers for ineffective communication. Furthermore, it leads to a conclusion that in spite of the availability of the other numerous modes of communication at their schools, some teachers choose not to use them as expected, to communicate with parents. They would rather wait until the day of the parents' evening to inform the parents about their concerns. Secondly they reflect that teachers tend to communicate only bad news to the parents. None of the parents mentioned that the teachers praised them for their efforts. Thirdly, both the parents and coordinators mentioned the issue of transport and the times when most school activities take place as not conducive for most parents because of the distance and that they rely on public transport. Perhaps it is noteworthy to mention that the schools are trying to address the issue by providing travelling expenses.

Moreover, it is evident that the coordinators are finding it difficult to perform their school duties and being SSP coordinators. This prevents them from being in constant

communication with the parents and keeping up with all the issues affecting their children.

In conclusion, these findings will hopefully bring awareness among the teachers at these schools of their role in preventing and not giving the parents a chance and the necessary tools for supporting their children at school. Different theories (Comer, 2005; Epstein, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005) that explored how they can be involved and what motivates parents to be involved in their children's learning revealed that the home- and school-based involvement of parents is motivated mostly by specific invitations from teachers. The findings emphasise that the teachers have a vital role to initiate and maintain the school-home relationship by communicating – specifically listening to what the parents have to say about their children, their aspirations, concerns and views and treating as partners. Lastly developing a programme on how the teachers can help and involve the parents at home and in classroom activities as they can provide the cultural and social capital needed by the school to improve the learners' achievement.

In Chapter Five I will draw conclusions, make recommendations based on these findings and present issues that can be investigated further.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study has been to investigate the effect of parental involvement on the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarship to attend independent schools in Johannesburg.

Interest in this research topic arose from my eleven years' experience of teaching at an independent secondary school but I soon observed that there are parents who are not involved in their children's learning. They are not only absent during parents' evening but also at school functions, sports, in school governance (PTA, council) committees. The absence of previously disadvantaged learners' parents is apparent. Equally so, the underperformance and behavioural issues of some of the scholarship learners has always been a topic that comes up at every marks meeting. Yet, there are scholarship (SSP) learners who are in the school's top leadership positions and doing well academically, in sports and other school activities. Because I was intrigued and concerned I examined the academic achievement and social adjustment of the learners that I teach who are on sponsorship. I realised that the learners who had the support of their parents and were involved in their learning were the ones who were performing well academically as well as in other aspects of their school life, compared to learners with parents who left all the responsibility of their child's education to the school and the coordinator. The fundamental question I asked myself was why parents do not become involved in their children's education knowing that it has such benefits, and especially when so much is at stake.

I embarked on this journey to gain an understanding of this issue hoping that from my findings I will help the parents understand the effect their involvement has in their children's academic achievement. In addition, I was hoping that the study will provide SSP, partner schools and other organisations that sponsor previously disadvantaged

learners to attend independent schools with information that might make them more knowledgeable about and sensitive to, the needs and challenges faced by previously disadvantaged parents at being involved in their children's education.

This chapter will present a summary of the findings and draw final conclusions on the study, then present recommendations for future research but before that a recap of the study will be provided.

Chapter 1 laid a foundation for the study and briefly discussed how different researchers and authors agree that parents should be involved in their children's learning and benefits of parent involvement were also briefly discussed (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2005: 260; Mmotlane et al., 2009: 528). The aim of the study, which is to investigate the role of parental involvement in the achievement of previously disadvantaged learners at independent secondary schools was also discussed, as was the design of the study. Moreover, no research study of this nature had been conducted by the Student Sponsorship Programme (SSP) or other organisations that sponsor learners on the effect of parent involvement on learners who attend independent schools. This created a need to conduct this study.

Chapter 2 presented a literature study that was conducted previously on parent involvement with the intention of understanding the phenomenon and verifying the aim of the study. The literature consulted emphasized two aspects of the research problem: the beneficial effects of parent involvement on learners' achievement even when learners are in secondary school and that parents from all walks of life – irrespective of their socio-economic status or educational background – want to be involved in their children's learning. Thus, the first part of the main question posed in the study was answered by the literature study. Much of the literature consulted concentrated on parent involvement at primary school and at government schools and not on secondary schools and independent schools, especially in South Africa.

In Chapter 3, I provided in detail the research design I implemented to conduct the research in order to obtain an understanding of and the meaning the parents and the coordinators attach to parent involvement. The characteristics of qualitative research design as well as the rationale for using a qualitative design in the investigation were discussed at length. The impact of parents' involvement in their previously disadvantaged children's education was investigated. Details of the data collecting strategies were also provided as well as the issues of validity and reliability and ethical principles.

Chapter 4 contains the research results and the findings, which included statements made by the participants and data from the parents and SSP coordinators as well as other relevant data that were obtained from the schools' websites and other school documents and observations made by the researcher. Data collection – the actual conducting of both the individual interviews and the group discussion – was done over a period of four months but participants were consulted previously on numerous occasions for clarification. Reading of documents and gathering of data that is relevant to the study on the schools' website was an on-going process as information is updated continuously.

The three paragraphs above provided an overview of the study. As already mentioned the aim of this chapter was to summarise the findings of the investigation on how previously disadvantaged parents are involved in their children's learning and how the schools assist them to undertake this task. On the basis of these findings, recommendations for improving and making the involvement of parents more effective and to have a greater impact on their children's education were set out. Finally, Chapter 5 concluded by recommending areas for future research and pointing out the limitations of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.2.1 Findings from the literature study

The literature study provided relevant data from which some of the conclusions were drawn. These included:

5.2.1.1 Initiatives to involve parents in their children's education is a worldwide phenomenon

Governments worldwide in their endeavour to improve the standard of education have implemented legislation that compels parents to be involved in their children's learning (see 1.1). To emphasise the importance of having parents involved in their children's education the Minister of Basic Education (Vuk'uzenzele Newspaper, March 2012) in a recent speech in parliament urged parents to be involved in the school governing body elections that were held between the first to the thirty-first of March 2012:

After the national elections, SGB elections are the most important voting process in this country. This means there are about eight million adults who can unleash their energies to get the education system to flourish. Not even the Department could match this sort of energy and thus it is important that parents get involved!

However, in spite of the legislation and well documented benefits of parent involvement and the pledges the parents make when they sign the code for parents in government schools, parental involvement is not at the level one would expect it to be in South Africa (see 1.1.3).

Findings from the literature confirm that all parents want to be involved in their children's learning and that they can make a valuable contribution to the learning process because

they want their children to be successful. Academic achievement is even more vital in secondary school as learners are preparing for their future careers.

Furthermore, a number of models of parent involvement have been developed explaining how parents can be involved at home and in school as well as school governance. These include Epstein's theory of parent involvement (2008) and the theory of overlapping spheres of influence, Comer's School Development Model (SDP) (2005) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) theoretical model of parental involvement (see 2.2), to mention just a few. Most studies focus on parental involvement in primary school. However, recent research confirmed that parent involvement in their children's learning in secondary school is a necessity and it is associated with a number of benefits for learners, parents, school and the community (see 1.1.2 & 2.4).

5.2.1.2 It is the school's responsibility to maintain parent involvement in secondary school

Much of the literature consulted highlighted the need for the school to develop a relationship with the parents and encourage parental interest in their children's learning both at home and in school. This is mirrored in each one of the three models of parent involvement (see 2.2) as they further assert that the school should not only initiate but sustain these relationships by creating a welcoming environment that nurtures parent involvement on all levels. Another initiative that teachers should take is to reach out to parents by developing a comprehensive parent involvement programme. Comer (2005) provides guidelines on the composition and roles of school teams that can manage the parent involvement programme.

5.2.1.3 Impact of parent involvement on learner's achievement in secondary school

Different authors (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2008) some of whom conducted large scale research projects, listed some of the

benefits of parent involvement on secondary school learners' achievement: set higher educational aspirations and clear goals, stay on at school, learners improve their reading and writing skills, get good marks, improve in school attendance, improve in completing their homework, come to class more prepared to learn, and have fewer behavioural problems (see 2.1 & 2.4). Minority learners' marks in other languages improve specifically English. Learners have an interest in pursuing further studies rather than dropping out of secondary school. They engage in discussions and plans regarding their future careers and the subjects or courses they have to study in higher education. As the learners' success increases so do their parent's expectations. Some of these benefits have a direct impact, others a more indirect impact.

5.2.2 Findings of the interviews and documents

5.2.2.1 Parents believe they have to be involved in their children's learning

One of the criteria for being offered and continuing to receive the SSP scholarship is good results. The study has shown that parents believe that their children have an ability to do well and get distinctions in some subjects and a bachelors pass in matric. It is for this and other reasons that all parents felt that they have to be involved in their children's learning to assist their children achieve their aspirations.

The data also indicted that both the parents' and the coordinators' understanding and the meaning they attach to the concept of parent involvement is limited. Their understanding of parent involvement goes as far as home based involvement which includes talking about schoolwork, encouraging their children and giving them support and guidance, monitoring their progress, supervising homework, motivating and getting extra help such as tutors for them, basically creating an environment that is conducive for their learners to succeed (see 4.3). The coordinators confirmed that they encourage parents to attend parents' evenings, sports activities and other school events; ensure that the learners do their schoolwork; be informed and available but not domineering;

developing a positive parenting style, pay their portion of school fees and volunteering (see 4.3).

5.2.2.2 Parent involvement has an impact on the learner's academic achievement

The findings indicate that both parents and coordinators believe that parental involvement is not only essential but that it has an impact on their children's achievement. It emerged that by expecting more from their children and having higher aspirations for them, the learners also tend to have high aspirations.

Secondly, participants indicated that their home-based involvement (see 4.3.1) whether it is supervising homework, talking about schoolwork, to mention a few, tends to have an effect on the marks and brings about an improvement in their children's work ethic. This was confirmed by the data collected from both the parents and coordinators (see 4.5.2).

Thirdly, the study indicates that parents acknowledge the importance of attending parents' evenings as they get a chance to discuss with teachers their children's progress or lack of it. This might not have a direct impact but the feedback they get from teachers gives them an awareness of where their children are lacking and how they can assist them.

Lastly, the data confirmed the assumption that parent involvement has an impact on their children's learning even though they are in secondary school. This was evident from the learners' matric results. Although it was a mixed bag of matric results, all learners passed their matric, seven obtained a bachelor's pass, which qualifies them to attend a university and two achieved a diploma pass. The results of the learners whose parents were adamant and articulated how they executed their plans in supporting their children's learning, were much better compared to the other learners, whose marks dropped significantly (see 4.5.3).

5.2.2.3 Parents' needs for support to overcome barriers to their involvement

It transpired that the parents are faced with numerous challenges that eventually have an impact on their ability and effectiveness in supporting their children's education. Secondly, even though the support systems are in place in the form of coordinators and housemasters, in some cases the environment in which they find themselves, does not empower or is not entirely supportive of the parents to undertake the task of being involved in the learning of their children. A substantial number of parents felt they do not get any support from the coordinator, especially when they have to deal with their children's academic progress on a day-to-day basis.

The data confirmed that all parents asserted that they need the school or the respective subject teachers to provide practical day-to-day guidance for them on how they can provide home support for the learners, especially with homework as they do not understand the subjects their children are doing. For this to happen, the classroom observation by coordinators should improve, as well as being committed to give more regular feedback to parents.

It also emerged that some of the parents are despondent and frustrated because they were not seeing any improvement in their children's marks in certain subjects, in spite of their efforts. They felt the lack of expertise and financial resources contributed to their failure to fully support their children's learning. The positive aspect here is that these parents are not blaming the failure of their children's success all on the coordinators/school.

The researcher observed that there seems to be, in some cases, the issue that parents do not understand the role of the coordinators and their responsibilities as parents because it is the parents' duty to discuss how to assist the learner regarding that particular subject with his or her child's teacher.

5.2.2.4 Parents do not feel a sense of belonging in their school community

The research identified some areas of weakness with regard to how the schools accommodate the parents and deal with the challenges they are facing in their roles and assimilate them into the school community and making them feel that they belong. The parents confirmed that their relationship with the school ranges from reasonable to sometimes difficult (see 4.3.4).

Quite a number of parents expressed their concern about the attitude of some teachers towards them. Some of the perceptions from the parents are that they are marginalised because of their socio-economic status and one parent felt that she does not have a right to complain or make demands on teachers because their child is on scholarship. Three parents have a perception that the school or the teachers do not care about them or think they have an important role to play with regard to their children's learning. They see this as evident from the fact that the teachers do not enquire about their absence at the parents' evenings or other school functions (see 4.3.4).

For other parents the feeling of not belonging is due to discriminatory experiences they had with some teachers.

5.2.2.5 The teachers/schools limit the involvement of parents

The study revealed that the coordinators' understanding of parent involvement showed that they limit parent involvement only to home-based involvement. This includes giving support to their children, encouraging, attending parents meetings, participating in school events, supervision of homework, providing for the needs of the children and payment of school fees. In a nutshell anything that has to do with the assistance they offer should be done at home, but nothing was mentioned about being involved in the classroom or curriculum provision. It emerged that the parents whose children had challenges in some subjects were informed that their children must attend the extra

lessons offered at school. In both incidents the underlying tone is that the teachers know what they are doing and the parents should not interfere and trust that the teachers know better.

The study also indicated that invitation to volunteering is limited to helping out during school functions (see 4.4.2) not as members of the decision-making bodies or other committees at the schools. Epstein (1997) advised that parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socio-economic groups should be sought after and trained to serve as representatives of other families in the schools. This is a vote of confidence that the parents are competent and that the relationship between the school and them is based on mutual trust.

5.2.2.6 Problems with communication

Communication between the school teachers and the parents was found to be a glaring weakness which has an impact on the parents' involvement in their children's learning which affected their achievement. The schools have invested a lot of money and time to make sure that systems of effective communication from school to home are in place and are continually adding new and more sophisticated means of communication. However, it seems as if in most cases these modes of communication are not effective and are not fully utilized, thus presenting barriers to communication (see 4.61).

The unhappiness about communication is based on a number of issues, such as: communication takes place through the internet and the majority of parents don't have internet access, parents only get to know about their children's non-performance during parents' meetings or when the problem is out of hand, being informed about meetings at short notice, only bad news is communicated to the parents. None of the parents mentioned that the teachers praised them for their efforts, no feedback or follow-up to see the matter through to the end is given by teachers after raising a concern about a learner, most of the communication strategies used at schools seem to be one-way, that is from the school to the parents; communication is mainly in English; meetings and

majority of the school events take place in the evenings thus presenting problems with transport for the parents.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Improve communication between school and the parents

Research to determine the extent and effectiveness of communication between teachers and the parents is recommended, because communication is an essential ingredient to collaboration.

This means the school has to conduct a survey to find out whether parents do actually receive correspondence from the school and also enquire about the best medium of communication with parents and how to make best use of it. It would also help to look at the number of times they send the messages. This should not be a once-off exercise but should happen on an on-going basis.

Teachers must create opportunities to update the parents' details and determine which manner of communication is most acceptable for the parent. Teachers should continually give them feedback, especially after a concern has been raised.

As mentioned earlier the teachers have a vital role to initiate, and maintain the school-home relationship by communicating – specifically listening to what the parents have to say about their children, their aspirations, concerns and views and treat them as partners to keep them interested in their children's learning.

5.3.2 Training of teachers on parent involvement

The schools have to reconsider how they can help the coordinators and the teachers to develop a healthy working relationship with parents without adding more stress to their workload. It would be beneficial to have a staff development plan focusing on training

the teachers and sensitise them to the needs of the parents and making them see the benefits of having parents participate in their children's learning both at home and in school.

5.3.3 Developing a parent involvement programme

The issue of developing a parent involvement programme merits research.

Teachers do want parents to be involved in their children's learning only at home but they do not want parents to interfere in the classroom because they want the children to be independent, responsible and learn accountability, thus, in one of the schools they felt they don't need a parent involvement policy. The question can be asked whether teachers and parents understand parent involvement correctly. The school must take up its responsibility of informing and guide parents on the ways to become involved and how to help their children succeed. Moreover, schools should acknowledge parents that are involved for their efforts.

The existing school council and PA/PTA need to expand their roles and responsibilities to deliberately include and encourage one or two parents to sit on the PA committees and other decision-making committees to be able to represent other parents. Some parents may not be interested in these positions, but given the opportunity some parents might volunteer their skills, which will benefit the school and the teachers which may consequently impact their children's confidence in learning. Parent representation in the governance and management of the school should be as broadly based as possible.

A more detailed study of the reasons of parents feeling isolated and not belonging in their school community is needed to determine the way of drawing the parents into the fold, making them feel welcome and alleviating the feeling of isolation. This is one more reason for developing a parent involvement programme that will develop self-confidence

and create opportunities for social networks with other parents with the aim of enabling them to be effectively involved in their children's learning.

Both the parents and their children are in an environment which is very different from where they come from, thus the parents also need support to feel welcome, needed and appreciated. This gives parents an assurance that they are important and that their relationship with the school is based on mutual trust.

5.3.4 Parents must create a support group system

Parents could also benefit by forming their own support group system and create networks among one another. A parent involvement programme can help to facilitate forming this support group.

5.3.5 Selection procedure needs to be re-visited

The principles of the SSP organisation programme and the selection procedure of partner schools need to be investigated. Furthermore, the organisation needs to re-visit how they place learners at partner schools that it should not be schools that are too far from the children's' homes if the schools do not have boarding facilities.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Three factors made the collection of data complex. The major concern was the language issue. While English is the second language to both the researcher and the participants and having requested the help of a professional translator I cannot guarantee that maybe there weren't cases where the questions during interviews might have lost the exact meaning when they were translated to the vernacular. Some words and ideas just could not be translated directly. Translating the parents' responses into English and trying to say exactly what they said might also have led to misinterpretation of the intended meaning. One way to validate the findings was for the researcher to

confirm with the participants whether what was written was what they intended to report. Second, transcribed interviews were sent to the participants and feedback requested.

The second concern was that I had a framework planned with time on where and how the study will be conducted, but due to unforeseen circumstances some things did not go as I anticipated. One of the coordinators became ill and compromised the number of participants for the focus group interview.

Another limitation could be that the participants could have not been completely truthful and told the researcher only the good things about their involvement because I teach some of their children. The data collected might not be valid or reliable as the parent participants might have tried to please the researcher.

Fourthly, the study was limited to three boys-only private schools out of the fifteen partner schools and the size of the sample was nine parent participants and three coordinators and one assistant coordinator. The data collected by the researcher cannot claim that it represents the reality, and that these are the experiences of all the parents in all the partner schools. The results or findings cannot therefore be generalized.

Even though I applied reflexivity during the course of the study, continually examining the biases I brought into the study, I cannot confidently say I was objective. The issue of being objective may have been compromised as the researcher is both a teacher and a parent in one of the schools where the research was conducted. I was cognisant of these facts and I aimed to not let biases dictate the interpretation.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The limitations mentioned above make it a necessity or create opportunities for further research to be conducted to shed more light on the research problem of this study. The issue of developing a parent involvement programme merits research.

- The study revealed that there are many challenges that hinder parents from participating in their children's learning. Each individual school needs to further investigate how the school can address these barriers, assist and empower parents to engage in their parenting tasks.
- Furthermore the schools could consider instituting a counseling system for these and other parents.
- Schools could also hold information evening/days that educate all parents about diverse cultures so that differences are not seen as a stumbling block but rather as a stepping stone to transformation.
- Another research topic that can be examined is: the learners' perception of parent involvement and the other teachers' perception of parent involvement. The present research study focused only on the parents' and coordinators' understanding of parent involvement. It appears that the teachers especially in secondary school need to change their mindset with regard to parent involvement as it emerges from the study that some teachers think the parents are indifferent with regard to their children's learning achievements.
- The schools are spending large sums of money on modes of communication. A detailed investigation into this is necessary to shed light on the best and most cost- effective ways schools can effectively communicate with parents. Findings by different researchers reported that the school holds the central position of being an agent that is responsible for initiating and facilitating the partnership between the school and the parents, families and the community.
- A more detailed study on how the school can develop a comprehensive parent involvement programme needs to be carried out. The models of parent involvement also specify that it is the school's responsibility to have a comprehensive programme on how to involve parents, develop close

communication between the school and the parents and be aware of the needs of the parents and their challenges, just to mention a few. The school should not only invite parents to be involved in their children's learning but should support and create opportunities and assist the parents in fulfilling their roles. Both Epstein (2008) and Comer (2005) emphasise the importance of adults working together collaboratively in the child's life to create an environment that is conducive to the learning and development of a child.

- Future researchers should conduct a study on how the learners of a SSP programme adapt to the new environment they find themselves in and how the school and parents can assist them to face whatever problems they encounter.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study presented a body of evidence that showed that parent support of learning, even when their children are in secondary school, has a positive impact on the learners' achievement.

Furthermore, it confirmed that parents from all walks of life want their children to be successful and are aware that they play a vital role in enabling their children to reach that success through being involved both at school and at home. It emerged from the study that most parents are involved at home in many ways but their involvement in school is limited to attending parents' meetings, school events and volunteer when invited. Yet, they feel they can still and want to do more to ensure that their children are successful at school. Consequently, the parents acknowledge that they need guidance from teachers on how they can assist their children daily especially with homework as the work becomes increasingly difficult in secondary school. Unfortunately this might not materialise until the major challenge – lack of communication between the schools and the parents – is addressed. Communication is a major building block for a relationship. There are numerous challenges that parents face but could be solved by dealing with

the issue of communication as it seems they stem from ineffective communication between the teachers and the parents.

However, despite the challenges, the parents are involved and the schools need to capitalise on that and make use of this rare opportunity to enhance and make their involvement more effective by developing a parent involvement programme. The resources are available. Through this programme the teachers, including the coordinators, could be re-skilled on how they can initiate and develop a mutual relationship with the parents, recognise their efforts and be sensitive to their challenges, create in them a sense that they belong to the school community, and lastly, acknowledge and make use of the capital they are bringing in to this important relationship.

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www.stjonhscollege.co.za. Parent Association website

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APPENDIX A

68 Ivy Road

Norwood

2192

27 July 2011

The Headmaster

St John's College

St David Road

Houghton

2198

Dear Sir

Re: Permission to conduct research

I hereby wish to formally apply for permission to conduct research at your school.

I am currently enrolled in the Faculty of Education at the University of South Africa, studying towards a Master's degree in Psychology of Education.

The title of my research is: Parent involvement and the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg. It is my intention to conduct interviews with the Grade Twelve SSP parents and the SSP coordinator.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Ndlovu N.B.(Ms)

St John's College

St David Road

Houghton

2198

13 August 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Permission to conduct research

I hereby wish to formally request your permission to conduct an interview.

I am currently enrolled in the Faculty of Education at the University of South Africa, studying towards a Master's degree in Psychology of Education.

The title of my research is: Parent involvement and the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg. I wish to assure you that your participation is voluntary, your confidentiality and anonymity will be respected and ensured.

Please find attached a copy of the consent form.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Ndlovu N.B. (Ms)

CONSENT FORM

Effect of parental involvement on the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarship to attend independent schools in Johannesburg

Miss Nomusa B. Mchunu

St John's College, St David Road, Houghton, 2198

(W) 0116453000; (H) 0116453239; (C) 0829776614; ndlovu@stjohnscollege.co.za

Please tick the box

YES NO

By signing this form, I agree that:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ▪ The study has been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▪ The benefits of the research study have been explained to me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▪ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may pull out at any time, without giving reason and without consequences | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▪ I agree to participate in a focus group interview that will be audio/video recorded. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▪ I have been told that my personal information will be kept confidential. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ▪ I agree that my data collected in this study may be stored and may be used for future research projects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

I hereby agree to take part in this study.

Name of participant

Date

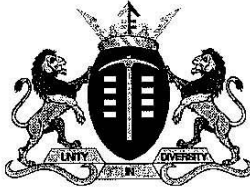
Signature

Name of researcher

Date

Signature

APPENDIX D



education
Department: Education
GAUTENG PROVINCE

For administrative use:
Reference no. : D2013/110

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	28 June 2012
Validity of Research Approval:	28 June 2012 to 30 September 2012
Name of Researcher:	Mchunu N.B.
Address of Researcher:	St John's College
	St David Road
	Houghton
	2198
Telephone Number:	011 648 3239 / 082 977 6614
Fax Number:	011 645 3000
Email address:	ndlovu@stjohnscollege.co.za
Research Topic:	Parent involvement and the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg
Number and type of schools:	THREE Secondary schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Makhado

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: Parent involvement and the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date :

Interviewee:

Place:

Position of interviewee: SSP Coordinator

Time :

QUESTIONS

1. What would you consider as your role as an SSP coordinator?
2. How would you define parent involvement?
3. What is the reason do you think parents, should be involved in the education of their children at secondary schools?
4. How is the relationship between the school and the SSP parents, parents and their children?
5. What does the school expect from families? How does the school assist and support families to do what's expected?
6. How does the school build personal relationships with SSP families, honour families' contribution, build on their strengths and work with families to improve learners' achievement?
7. How does the parents' involvement influence learners' achievement?
8. In what forms does parent involvement take (at school and at home)?
9. In which way do you assist the parents to be aware of their role in education?
10. What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?
11. What should the school do to encourage parent involvement?
12. Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Closing Questions: request participants to make a conclusion and confirm the answers provided earlier.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: Parent involvement and the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date :

Interviewee:

Place:

Position of interviewee: Parent

Time :

QUESTIONS

1. Tell me; what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?
2. Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.
3. In what ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school and at home?
4. What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?
5. Which other areas or aspects of school matters would you like to be involved in?
6. Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?
7. Could you share how your involvement influences your child's achievement?
8. How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?
9. To what extent do you feel welcome at your child's school?
10. What are the school's expectation regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?
11. Describe the assistance and support that is offered to you so as to meet these expectations?
12. How does the school build personal relationships with you –the parents, honour your contribution and build on your strengths, work with families to improve your children's achievement?
13. What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?
14. What can the school do to facilitate parent involvement and make it more effective?

Closing Questions: request participants to make a conclusion and confirm the answers provided earlier.

Final Questions: participants are required to provide suggestions and opinions about the discussed topic. **Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?**

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

SCHOOL A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: Parent involvement and the academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 19/08/11

Interviewee: Mrs KG

Place: Johannesburg

Position of interviewee: Parent

Time : 13h00

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

NN: Tell me; what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent KG: I wish that he would study and not fool around at school and do revision so that when he writes exams he will be well prepared, be sure what of what he will do in the exam and pass. I have noticed that most of the time that children don't prepare for their exams. They think they know everything and then start preparing for exams two days before the exam, which is too late. I don't know whether they are allowed to ask the teachers questions if they don't understand or maybe they are scared to ask teachers when they don't understand what the teacher said. I know sometimes they think when you ask too many questions then you are stupid because you don't understand. Especially we blacks are scared to ask. I want him to be free to ask teachers anything when he doesn't understand.

NN: Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.

Parent KG: I help him and I tell him without too much pressure to take his books and study. I tell him he must be serious about his education because I did not get what he has. I say this opportunity he got is important and he must take his school work seriously. He needs to know what he wants to do when he finishes school if he doesn't do that he won't succeed. I tell him that they gave him this opportunity because they could see that he is intelligent. He was very intelligent when he was at primary school. I

don't know whether he got to high school he started to play and maybe its peer pressure. Sometimes he doesn't do things. I don't know what is happening or how this can be fixed. I do tell him that you must improve your marks and whatever you do you must not just do it but have passion and do it whole heartedly. I always talk to him about why he is not performing well but he doesn't say much. I think he wastes time with friends who are intelligent and forget that these friends are intelligent. They find it easy to understand things in class. I think he wastes time with them.

NN: In what ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school and at home?

Parent KG: At home I always tell him to study his books and that I won't accept that he shouldn't study or do well. I always ask him: "Do you have homework? What were you given at school to do this weekend? Do you need a computer?" If he needs the internet I say: "Go to the office and do your work- use the internet there." But I don't know if he does the work or not and how he does.

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent KG: This thing is, sometimes I feel ok sometimes bad because I did not get where he is. I did not get to matric where he is and that is a problem. I can't help him because I didn't get to high school. It is difficult to help him. When he was at primary I used to help him with his maths in grade 4 and 5. He was top of his class because I used to help him because I understood what was going on because I did that maths at school. Since he is in high school, it is difficult for me to help him.

NN: Which other areas or aspects of school matters would you like to be involved in?

Parent KG: I don't know what I can say because sometimes when you are not educated it is hard to understand modern things. It is difficult if you are not educated you can't just be involved in the present day things you don't understand.

NN: Would like to elaborate about the modern day things that prevent you from being involved?

Parent KG: Like using computers. All communication and everything nowadays is done through computers and I don't know how to use nor own one.

NN: Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?

Parent KG: As a parent it means to be involved in everything he does to be successful. Like studies, and sports because he likes sports especially soccer and I encourage him not to lose hope in sports. That's what I can do for him. He liked sports since he was young. I sometimes come and watch him playing.

NN: Could you share, how are you involved and how your involvement influences your child's achievement?

Parent KG: It helps when we talk because he listens sometimes when I speak to him I do see that it helps him to improve to do some things that he was no longer doing.

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Parent KG: The relationship is ok although we don't speak often as nowadays they use internet to communicate and emails. The maths teacher took my phone number at the parents evening the teacher promised to communicate and asked if I have an email address. I said I don't but he never called again. Even though you want to communicate with the teachers you don't know how. It is hard because you don't have and can't use these emails. It is hard if you don't have and can't use emails because I can't use and know nothing about it.

Between me and him I don't see any problems in our relationship with him it is fine because when I talk to him he listens. When I give him advice he listens to me although sometimes he doesn't do the things I want but most of the time he listens to me.

NN: To what extent do you feel welcome at your child's school?

Parent KG: I feel that I am welcomed at school when I go there. I am happy with the teachers. Communication is the only problem I got him a tutor but it did not work out because the maths teacher never phoned. The way we communicate we who aren't educated are side-lined. The main problem is communication

NN: What is the school's expectations regarding your involvement? Is it written down? Was it verbally communicated to you?

Parent KG: I don't remember them telling us anything except that; they tell us to be involved by encouraging them.

NN: Would you describe the assistance and support that is offered to you so as to meet these expectations?

Parent KG: They tell us that if the child is not doing well in his work he should attend extra lessons. I don't know whether he attends or not but when he comes home in the afternoon I always encourage him to attend those lessons, as this will raise his marks because he gets an opportunity to discuss what he did not understand in class. There is nothing else or specific the school told me to do.

NN: How does the school build personal relationships with you –the parents, honour your contribution and build on your strengths, work with families to improve your children's achievement?

Parent KG: Sometimes they do they do encourage us. They send emails to my employer if they are happy.

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent KG: None, I can think of right now. There is nothing that can prevent me from helping him.

NN: What can the school do to facilitate parent involvement and make it more effective?

Parent KG: Get someone to speak to parents who aren't educated like me on what to do and how to do whatever we need to do to help and be involved in their children's education.

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent KG: No

NUMBER 2

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 21/08/11

Interviewee: Ms J

Place: Soweto

Position of interviewee: Parent

Time : 12h32- 13h25

NN: Tell me, what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent J: Prosperous future, determination to continue and finish school, succeed and not drop out of school even after matric, not drop in marks. All that he wants to do that he succeeds.

NN: Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.

Parent J: I encourage him by saying what he has I did not have. I make myself as an example that he shouldn't be like me but he must also be an example for his sister, and tell him that education is very important. If you want something you should work hard to get it

NN: In what ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school and at home?

Parent J: At home I give him time to do his school work I ask about his work: how is he doing, where he is lacking and support him and work together as parent and a child. At school I'm also involved through parents meetings or come to support him in sports and speech night when he gets awards

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent J: I am happy that he got to Secondary school. I am happy with his determination to do well. I must be involved and support him though I don't know what they are doing our education is not the same. I help him just to encourage, trust that he will succeed and be supportive to what he wants to do. He wants to be an engineer I

need to support and be happy for him. When he doesn't understand he shows me and I help. We sit down and talk about what he doesn't understand and I help him where I can.

NN: Which other areas or aspects of school matters would you like to be involved in?

Parent J: I wish to volunteer in many things and be more involved even in sports and in their academics but the problem is distance, transport and financial means but I would like to be involved in many things they do.

NN: Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?

Parent J: Draft what we are hoping for, sit down and talk. Know him, what he likes. Don't be angry and punish him when he doesn't do well or fail but be there for him and support because he can see that he has a parent who supports him. I always support him. I was scared when he played rugby but I supported him. It means to give yourself time to know who he is and what he likes and give him support. Look at his schoolwork, have time with him and supervise that he is doing his work. Know his schedule, be there to supervise. Being involved is many things. Children are not the same; praise him for what he is doing. It is not easy where they are and what they are doing is not easy. They need a lot of support from us as parents

NN: Could you share how your involvement influences your child's achievement?

Parent J: My involvement helps when school close I check his results, identify weaknesses and ask where the problems are and the cause. We then sit down and check what went wrong though I don't help him 100% most of the time he does thing by himself because he is very diligent.

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Parent J: It is Ok he is quiet he doesn't say when he has problems he thinks that he is a nuisance. He does things for himself. I have to follow and check. I always tell him to be free to tell me if he needs things. My relationship with the school is right the communication is good if they need to talk to me they call and they always get hold of me and when I am not doing anything I do come to school. It depends especially if it's

something that is taking place in the afternoon but the only problem is evening events because I have problems with transport- last speech night I got home at 12 midnight and when he was inducted as a prefect I got to school at 8h15 the event was over inspite of the fact that I left home at 6 am.

NN: To what extent do you feel welcome at your child's school?

Parent J: It is welcoming when he started at school they told us that we should look at where we come from they do not discriminate

NN: What is the school's expectations regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?

Parent J: Volunteer here and there but mostly it's in school work they always ask us to give support to our children. We are needed as parents as the children should see that we support them. The school is more supportive than me to my son

NN: Describe the assistance and support that is offered to you so as to meet these expectations?

Parent J: There are lot of things the school does for him. At some point when I could not help him they (Housemaster) bought him toiletry when I didn't have money to help. He might not be with his parents but at school they are like parents to him.

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent J: None. I wish him the best because he has done well. He is different form the local children: dignity, respect, - because of the school and myself. I encourage him and praise him for the way he is doing performing, I talk to him and I have no doubt that he will have a bright future

NN: What can the school do to facilitate parent involvement and make it more effective?

Parent J: The school should encourage parents to be involved

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

JB: No

NUMBER 3

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 23/08/12

Interviewee: Mrs Mg

Place: Florida

Position of interviewee: Parent

Time : 10h30 – 11h31

QUESTIONS

NN: Tell me; what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent Mg: I just want him to do well Er..in his academics so that he can get a chance to go to a good varsity so that he can prepare himself for his future.

NN: Could you share in what ways are you as parents involved in your child's education at school and at home and the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations?

Parent Mg: The most important thing is communication. We communicate a lot. He has to feel free and ask when he is not getting things right and whenever he is getting things wrong. We encourage him that he should feel free and ask the teachers and ask anybody else who can help him because I as a parent and his father we did not go and do matric. So we cannot help him with some of the things we don't understand so we are making sure that he asks the teachers at school.

At home there are those rules that we have for our children. They have to do well in their school work. We taught our kids that they should have respect for the teachers and their parents so that everything can be easy in life. If they humble themselves and they will never lose anything. When you humble yourself, be good and ask whenever they can't get things right. Since they were young we taught them what they have been following. If you go back to primary school where they were they know that they have been good children all the way up to today. The 3 children both his little sister and the brother

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of a secondary school learner?

Parent Mg: Yes, we are so involved so that he doesn't lose his track. He should be focused and not to play a lot with the other kids and bring back bad results and because of that he is always focused and never loses his goal. Just because there are other parents and children who say when they are 18 they have to decide on things on their own, for me as a mother and his father we will never do that. We always have to direct him whether he is 18 or not so that he gets good marks. It's a different environment where he is, different from ours as parents. Now you just have to be there for them whether they are 18 or 21, make them just focus and do the right thing.

Oh and not forgetting God because we have taught them that everything that is good comes from Him. I tell him that: "We don't have anything we are not rich you have to break that chain of poverty by working hard at school".

Just the country the way it is, it seems so easy for them just go with the world.

NN: Which other areas or aspects of school matters would you like to be involved in?

Parent Mg: Ja, like they are going for after classes(consolidation lessons) they go and learn as he is not doing well in maths they have to go to class but when I ask: "Do you go to after class?" and he says:" Yes but I haven't seen the change even if you go to see those teachers after class. I haven't seen any change. There is nothing that is showing." I wish I could be there or the teacher phones to say I have been teaching this after school and he has done better or is getting worse at least to let us know because I keep on asking: "Why are you not getting right in maths?"

NN: Could you explain, what attempts or have made to get in touch with the maths teacher?

Parent Mg: I haven't been able to get in touch with the maths teacher. Maybe also I am supposed to communicate also with the teacher.

NN: Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?

Parent Mg: Me as a parent I am involved in everything he does whether during school holidays or school time. It's a routine whether it's at school or when he is going out with friends when its school term. He always let me know wherever he goes whether it's for few hours or an hour and he is used to that. He doesn't just go, he always lets us know. When we say no, he won't go. He doesn't get offended and he knows that is how he was brought up. We are so involved in his life.

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Parent Mg: (Silent) I find it sometimes it is very difficult because like when we are going for meetings or anything they would just send a text that at 6 o'clock or 7 you should be at school. They don't know our situation whether we are going to manage to attend the meeting or not. Er.. even if we didn't attend the meeting they won't follow up and ask why, why we didn't attend the meeting. It is a problem as parents they never get in touch with us.

NN: To what extent do you feel welcome at your child's school?

Parent Mg: (Silent) we are always welcome in the school. We feel the door is always open at the school. And the rules, I like the rules at the school. Yes when you've got time you are always welcome. My son has been rowing you can go anytime anywhere as long as you can afford and parents in the rowing community are always very good. And for my son everything has been going easy for him because of his behaviour. He has always been a good child so teachers are very open with him.

NN: What is the school's expectations regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?

Parent Mg: We try and do that though we haven't done as much but we try as parents to meet whatever they want us to do but I don't know whether it's as good as they want us to do. I don't know. I really don't know

(Silent) not really depending on colour of your skin

NN: Describe the assistance and support that is offered to you so as to meet these expectations?

Parent Mg: Like the Housemaster he only gives permission whether he is staying in or out he hasn't really told us what should do or should not to do we don't know about that all we do is to phone and ask whether he should be doing something during the weekend. We always follow the rules.

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent Mg: (Silent) maybe it's because of how our financial situation makes us not to feel free and comfortable and to be involved. Most of the time we don't go so much as far as the school would want us to do.

Like with sports –if he wants to do rugby, rowing, cricket then they (SSP coordinator) will tell him he should choose only one sport because it is expensive. He can't afford to play all this because when they are travelling you have to pay because they have to fly to where ever they are going. You can't afford this as a parent. So you only choose one sport that is cheaper and doesn't travel so much and he doesn't have to do so well because once he does well he will be in the first team. Obviously he has to travel. So where do you get money to buy or to pay for air tickets, accommodation, food as we can't afford?

NN: What can the school do to facilitate parent involvement and make it more effective?

Parent Mg: (Silent) they never get in touch with us just to ask us that(to be involved). As a parent I just to ask what can we do. We have never tried to ask what should we do but we know we should go and ask. Because our child is just being sponsored so most of the time we don't. We can't afford to pay fees, so we just don't ask. (Silent) As long as he goes to school and get what he can get. It's fine.

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent Mg: No but I think they can do better in the way they talk to parents.

NUMBER 4

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 19/08/12

Interviewee: Ms P

Place: Thokoza

Position of interviewee: Parent

Time : 13h00

Position of interviewee: SSP Parent, School A

NN: Tell me, what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent P: YoI expect ...I think maybe I expected more ...they have given him an opportunity I thought he can grab it and use but ... eh the marks were not what I expected but I'm just hoping he will improve at the end of the day and maybe get good marks I expected four distinctions so I don't know if he will be able to keep up with that whatever comes..... I will have to accept

Ja, Drama that what I ...and maths because he is a brilliant child he can but he is not putting more on his studies I thought maths English, Drama physics I wasn't expecting he has been battling since and Afrikaans that's what I thought he can get A,s on those and History he is doing well on those

NN: Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.

Parent P: Ja, At home I always check and force him to go study and cut TV you know if he is not studying and I check what do you have, do you have anything but sometimes I don't even know like Mr T will say I have given him the sheet and when I ask he will tell me I have done them there at school but when you come they are not done you know on the report they are not done so I asked mr t to you know like communicate with me how much he's given then I can monitor that it never happened so I always check do you have any homework if he does I will say you sit and you do your HMW and anything else he didn't do; go study you know all those things and you try to take all the things I didn't buy him a blackberry he just got a blackberry now because I thought it's gonna distract him from studying so after we've been to the psychologist then I thought you know what I'll buy him the blackberry because he said he is the type of child that needs to be motivated so if you are not he gets demotivated he doesn't do well so I must reward him even if its small little things because he improved a little bit but we target is for 70% but he didn't get 70% but the marks improved so I didn't give him the BB I'm not thinking that you know I'm demotivating him

Parent P: I do come for parents evenings or anything concerning him I do come and if I feel I'm not happy I always communicate with the teachers, Mr K mostly and Mr T I do and I spoke to Mrs Dwt also before and Mrs AN so I always speak if there is a problem I do come to the school and speak to them about my concern

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement (your involvement) as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent P: I do I do feel comfortable to be involved even we fight sometimes because he thinks I am from the old school and I can't help him with the other things but I always get involved and find out see how far even if there are some things I cannot help but I always

NN: Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?

Parent P: To be involved in everything social life everything I need to know what he is doing we share everything even when he goes out he will tell me what happened so ehm we share anything we talk about anything as a parent and even like when they go out you as a parent you worry but he will come back and tell you what happened so weehm we've been close to each other Ehm we fight sometimes it is difficult as a mother sometimes like he is doing you don't want you him to do you end up arguing but you still comeback to be close he is like a friend to me and I let him talk to me about anything so that helps for me

NN: Could you share how your involvement influences your child's achievement?

Parent P: Ehm.... I don't think it helped much because I think the ..I couldn't help the understanding I don't know maths and Physics and that's where is his weakest subjects they are the weakest subjects for him so I went out to find out.... to go out and get help because this school was not they do offer but he wasn't there and I am not also there to say hey please go you know push him so that I couldn't do I had to find someone who come sit home and I am there and I know he sits with the person an hour or two and then they do things and they give him exercises and I make sure he does those exercises so that's where I can say I was doing my stuff for the school because if I

phone him he is sitting on the bench I can't say hey you go I will say you go but I am not here to see that he's gone to the class so that's my problem

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Ehm ..I think it is good Mh..(S) we never have a problem with the school.....(S)

NN: How does/did the school build personal relationships with you –the parents, honour your contribution and build on your strengths, work with families to improve your children's achievement?

Parent P: No to improve his marks I only come when there's parents evening thats when I'll hear and after that everything is gone, finished and there is no communication I'll be promised that I will get communication but there is nothing no emails or anything

Assist of support you?

They only have had a Ehm a study skills program which I paid I put his name down for that but they refunded me that so that's the only thing that they helped me with

NN: What is the school's expectations regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?

Parent P: No, even with the refund of the skills program no one told me because I paid the money I was told by the person that was running that thing that the money was paid they have refunded me but no one contacted me even today no said we sponsored your child , nothing but I was grateful for that it was on overdraft

NN: Which other areas or aspects of school matters would you like to be involved in?

Parent P: If its to help out I don't mind because I even put my name on the ruby fest because I would like to be , it's a good school and we've enjoyed and its been so nice and I am grateful for the opportunity that they gave my child and I would still like to be if there is anything I don't mind them calling me and saying hey we've got something here if I can help I don't mind at all I'd be happy to do it

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent P: No, I work and I am committed in all other things but I would always make a plan if I can come I don't mind

NN: What can the school do to facilitate parent involvement and make it more effective?

Parent P: Ehm ..I think for they need to enforce children the studying hard the learning skills maybe not spending more time outside playing maybe have from when they finish from 2-3 maybe 2h30 they must be study time it doesn't matter if you have anything to do or not you must stay in because they have more time outside than doing the work maybe if they can enforce that they need to have a study period they need I don't know

They need to involve them in anything like if your child they mustn't wait until July results they need to from first month work together with the parent they need to tell call you talk with the parent and to see how can we help some of the parents we don't know we just shout at the child force him to study and he is not studying and you're not getting feedback the following term again he is not doing well it's something that from first month the child is not doing well work together with the parents and maybe tell him that I have given him that send an email I have to look at the work and force him to do the work and I will email him back and say he's done this please check if he is given you back the work something like that

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent P: No

SCHOOL B

NUMBER 1

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 17/08/11

Interviewee: Mr K

Place: Johannesburg CBD

Position of interviewee: Parent

Time : 12h00- 12h35

NN: Tell me; what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent K: It means I have to be there for my child.

NN: Could you explain further what is it that you do to show you are there for your child?

Parent K: I must support my child I must go when the child is playing sports, when there are meetings that are called, when there are things I am not sure of , checking the progress of the child, even if he is not doing well I have to find out . I have to call and go speak to the teachers. Basically it means I have to be informed and I have to inform the school whatever I know about my child.

NN: Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.

NN: In what ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school and at home?

Parent K: fortunately I am a teacher, so I do check all his work that he has done at school and try to find out why some of the marks aren't coming (not good). Sometimes I do try and share my experience of school because he is doing stuff that I may be doing now sometimes that I did back in the days like maths though I struggle a bit. But I do ask him to explain to me and say what is wrong how come are not getting those marks. Basically I do try to help. I ask him if he wants extra lessons with other learners or teachers.

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent K: I am happy when it comes to my involvement because as much as the school expects me to be part and parcel of what happens with my child but they also want my boy to grow up and take responsibility, and accountability. So that makes me happy because to me it means the boy is growing. That is the way to go. Although most of the time I feel I should take part and help but even my boy would not tell me some of the things but I do find out about them because I am interested in his learning. And he would say he did not want to tell me because he wanted to do whatever on his own without my help.to me that is a good way of doing things. So I am happy. I am involved but not stifle the boy.

NN: In those cases where he doesn't tell about some things, could you share how do you find out what is going on in his life?

Parent K: sometimes when I go to collect him from school I find out that he is in detention. Basically it is his fault. I do appreciate the fact that he is trying to be man enough and handle things by himself but it does inconvenience me in a way because if I would have known I would have come to fetch him late after his detention time is over. He tells me about other things but he doesn't to tell me when he is in trouble.

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Parent K: These school that we have our kids in do not understand have an understanding of where we from because if you think of the time these meeting are held really is practically impossible to attend all of them. Surely an understanding is needed that no person could be out of his house at this time of the night because there are times when I am asked to go on camp with my school. My boy where he goes to and I need my wife to go my wife to go and attend the meeting cant. It's late at night. I don't think they understand the other side of the population group-that is black people. There is a lot of stuff that they don't understand. I think. For example there was a boy who had to go to the school camp and at the same time he had to go to the mountain for circumcision.it was a big issue I don't understand why. All I am trying to say is I don't think these schools understand an African kind-of family that we do things differently and they want to do things the Western way which I think is not fair.

NN: What is the school's expectations regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?

Parent K: Mh.. I think the school expects me to play my role as a parent of ensuring that whatever the school expects my son to do I will do it and sometimes it's difficult. And we know boys will be boys they may not give us that information. The school expects me to follow up on whatever my boy does at school. So I try my best based on what I know to help. I also expect the school to inform me about major issues. Minor issues I think everyone has to grow everyone has to make mistakes so my son is bound to make mistakes. So far I haven't been told about those minor issues. I think we are on the same level of understanding me and the school

NN: Could you give me an example of issues that you are expected to deal with as a parent.

Parent K: I know my boy is active he might talk in class it is not a good thing. However if he is not rude, at parents evenings I am told my boy cannot keep quiet but they all stressed that he is not a rude person. I told the teachers that the moment he becomes rude please tell me. I know he is naughty. To me being naughty is part of a growing process. I am not saying he should always be doing that but I try to speak to him to behave because some teachers can't handle the talking. I have been told when he is on detention because he missed a test. Being rude to me is major. I haven't heard of that so I assume he is on the right track.

NN: Describe the assistance and support that is offered to you so as to meet these expectations?

Parent K: The school is very supportive because Er..send us information we like recently on drug and alcohol abuse. They even said if there are any boys who need counseling they will put them in rehabilitation center although we need to pay for that. That shows to me that they are concerned. That's one way of supporting us. They expect my boy to pass at school and the majority of teachers have been willing to offer extra lessons. Sometimes as I stay in the township when they go on trips they will organise that the boy is taken or spend the night with one of the parents who can afford to give them a place to sleep for the night. To me this is good and being supportive.

NN: Could you share how your involvement influences your child's achievement?

Parent K: So far I am quite happy with the results that he is getting. Although there things like math where the boy is struggling. The boy knows there is no hiding away. I speak to the teachers on a regular basis. He tries to do his best. He knows I will be supportive of him and I do go to watch him playing sports. So he kind of not want to disappoint me.

NN: Could you share what are your aspirations or expectations for your son?

Parent K: Look er... it depends on the subjects. He is doing isiZulu home language and I expect him to do well in it. That is non-negotiable. Fortunately he is doing well in that subject. With the other subjects I tell the boy to tell me which marks he wants to get. At

the end of term I say this is the mark we agreed on and should tell me why he could not get it. Recently he did not do well because on his sporting activities. He told me that even before the teachers even told me. So basically I don't want to push him that much about marks but he should know that he has all my support at the same time we need to get good marks. I would like him to get eighties and above but if he can't he needs to explain to me why he is not getting that without making him feel that he is a failure or something like that. Basically he is getting some eighties and some subjects he is not doing well but we are working on that.

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent K: It could be the age difference. Sometimes you wonder how these young ones think. When you start sharing information with them they don't believe that you were once a child yourself. The age difference problem does apply. Fortunately myself as a teacher I am able to relate with him we do talk about everything that is happening in his life. I am able to talk to him about stuff. And he would say 'Dad you are not supposed to be talking to me about those.' We are things getting there though for me the age difference is an issue. As a teacher and a coach boys are able to say stuff I take that and apply it with my son and that takes away all the tension that we might be having. We have a friendship kind of relationship which makes it easy to discuss things although I feel the age difference may make it sometimes difficult to understand each other.

NN: Could you share what impact these barriers affect your child's learning

Parent K: I think those barriers do contribute to the results that my son is getting in the sense that some of the teachers may not understand my child and vice versa my child may not understand the teacher so it puts everyone in an awkward position myself included because there are times that when my child will tell me stuff simply because he'll say I know you will side with teachers. Usually it's the minor issues that could have been avoided. Eventually the child would rather stay away or develop a certain attitude which might not be conducive to good results. It may not have a direct impact but in the long run because in a situation where you like the teacher the chances of doing well are higher because you don't want to disappoint the teacher. To me in the long run it does affect the way my son does his school work or the results.

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent K: NO

NUMBER 2

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 12/08/11

Interviewee: Mrs KV

Place: Cresta

Position of interviewee: Parent

Time : 15h10 – 16h05

QUESTIONS

NN: Tell me; what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent KV: Every parent wants the best for her child. Er.. it is hoping he will get whatever he needs and dream of. I will be able to support him to get his goals of what he wants to be in life. Er.. It's a dream of every parent to see your child succeed and become something else one day. Be well accomplished.

NN: Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.

Parent KV: I do tell my child what I expect and my aspirations. Sometimes I even set challenges. For example, I would tell him that if he gets above 70% or 80% I will give him, maybe R200. You know those kinds of things. I say: "At the end of the term if your marks look like this you will get this reward or something because you did very well." So I do set up those kinds of things so that they do pull together. Sometimes they get it sometimes they don't as we know that there are other subjects that are too hard for them. But they know that if they get good marks for maths or English like 80% their mother is going to give them R200/R100. Sometimes it is difficult for the child but I do set up those kinds of things.

NN: I understand, with regards to your son who is in matric is there anything else specifically that you do to enable him to reach your aspirations?

Its either I tell him to be close to a friend who is able to help. Like my son, he is the only boy from his school around my area. I remember the other day he was supposed to write an English test. He told me that he has great difficulties with poetry. I tried to help but I also got stuck and I was not 100% sure that I had helped that much. I asked him if there was a boy in his class who is good in poetry. I said we should phone and set up an appointment. I arranged with the boy to help him. He went there-Randburg to get

help. I saw his marks improved. That is the only way I can help. Because he told me his problem is poetry and he is trying hard to understand. Another thing what I have started right now it's to get a tutor. I got a tutor for all of my kids. They go to the tutor every day at 3 o'clock. There are challenges with regards to my son. They attend as a group you'll find that the tutor is available from 3- 5 after and another session is from 6h30 - 8h30. After 8h30 it won't be possible to teach them. For him especially because of sports he comes home at 6h30. He still needs to attend the tutor and he is very tired and is supposed to rest and get something to eat. Those kind of challenges and you'll find that he will see the tutor for just 30 minutes. But its helping according to him it is helping a lot

NN: Could you share the ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school

Parent KV: According to me the way I understand it at school it is more for academics because it's the school. They say support your child it means it's to be involved in your child's learning problems and whatever maybe you must know that there is a project its due when, you know those kind of things. What is needed and any kind of help that you can give as a parent you can give it. That is how I interpret it. If can help I do. I do if I can.

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent KV: Yes I am comfortable Er.. It's just that more especially in high school its more challenging then in primary school. I could help my child from grade 1 to 3 when my child came home with homework we could do it together but the challenges came at secondary school. The challenges come because I find that whatever he is doing in maths I don't even have a clue what is going on. No matter how much I can try as a parent its more difficult and we end up asking someone to help because I as an individual can't help.

NN: Which other areas or aspects of school matters would you like to be involved in?

Parent KV: I think so far as a parent whatever I've done I am happy with it. I think if I can get more opportunity or more ideas on anything else and how I can do that to improve, then I will be happy to do that. I am trying my best and then you find someone who says: "You can buy tablets it gives energy and the child will come back strong at

home. After being involved in sports at school, he will come back home and be able to do some work.” As parents we talk about what to do because when the child comes home he is dragging himself and says: “Mama I am so tired.” and you can also see that he is really tired and we are expecting that he must do his homework and he still needs to attend the tutor and produce good work. So they do have many challenges. I think more of sports. Sports is compulsory for them to be effective at school at the end of the day is disadvantages them in their academics work. If I may say that this is how I see it.

NN: Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?

Parent KV: Er.. (silent) parent involvement. It's to be involved in your child's life in whatever way you can, support, school work or Er... whatever that going on in your child's life it's to be involved if I can say that if a child Er... maybe the child has a concern he must not be scared to tell you that:” Mama I have this problem” whatever so ever. The parent has to be involved in whatever way he can and help the child at the end of the day. I'm not sure if I am saying /explaining it right.

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Parent KV: It is good, we get along very well.

NN: What is the school's expectations regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?

Parent KV: From school? No its not written it's just that when we have meetings they say parents we urge you to support your child at home.

NN: How does the school build personal relationships with you –the parents, honour your contribution and build on your strengths, work with families to improve your children's achievement?

Parent KV: So far I can say the school is trying they do inform me on those little things in terms of they needing extra lessons but the pressure is on the kids because they don't balance sports and school work

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent KV: I think so it's more to balancing sports and doing well academically other things.

Another I see that it is more challenging is what I have noticed a child was at Soweto and academically doing there he was fine well. Infact the academic standard of education not just in Soweto but at a government school is different from independent schools. I know that because I teach there. For my child it's a very big jump. I remember when he started it was a very big jump. It was not an easy thing. Maybe it would have been better if he started in private school early. Or his IQ is high something like that or he easily understands what is taught. To get into that standard in grade 8 is a very big jump for a child to get settled down and understand the way they teach. It takes time to settle down. Where he comes from he was ok. They need to understand the background where they come from; English was a 2nd language now it's a mother tongue. The child says I am putting pressure on him because you tell him to get good marks. I remember as a school to take a child they expect the child to perform because he got a scholarship it's very tricky.

Er.. I can say they do help but the most challenging part I think its sports because you need to balance it. There it lacks between sports and academics they need to go extra lessons these 2 is not working it more into balancing they do extra lessons with the school. The other challenge it about the library is the distance if he has to do extra lessons maybe he has to go to the library for whatever then you'll find that he gets home round about 7h30pm which you can see its very strenuous to the child. He uses public transport and to walk from his school to Sandton is a very long distance to and fro everyday it is challenging. By the time he gets home he is dragging himself and

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent KV: I think it's just that children they like to compare themselves with others. if you have a goal you have set don't look aside and say so and so is doing this or that. We know there is peer pressure among teenagers but comparison is rife. If you have a goal to reach, focuses on those things don't be more interested in other people's lives. Er... I don't know whether it only happens to SSP kids but what I have seen is that Er...if they make a slight mistake it becomes a big thing. I can say that as an SSP child you are expected to perform exceptionally and they are expecting so much from you. That is why every eye is upon you. It's unlike those other kids who are paying. I remember this other email from the English teacher it was a very big thing –plagiarism marks were

deducted things like that it happens it might happen to any child it was so big its so big but not big a child must be careful enough

NUMBER 3

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 13/08/11

Interviewee: Mrs MT

Place: Jhburg CBD

Position of interviewee: Parent School

Time : 12h18 – 13h29

NN: Tell me; what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent Mt: I wish he could continue with school my prayer is that Er he'll be strong. I always tell him all the things he has been through they have to make him strong not bitter. Make him a stronger person whatever adversities he meets should make him a strong person. "To have tasted both worlds the world of being disadvantaged and of being advantaged you were somewhat advantaged because you managed to get into this school ordinarily you wouldn't have been able to have access that someone would care about your potential and see that you are good in music and a good public speaker". In these schools they wouldn't have identified that whereas in these schools (independent) they nurture that so that is an advantage. That is the upside of it the downside Look at this as building you, to strengthen you because once you have passed this and began your career you're done. That's what I aspire to and hope he will see /look at it as I do he is not a bitter child and do well at school. The way he is he doesn't even look at himself as having a different skin colour. Even with the family that helped they open their home and he is always welcomed there he is a lovely child even what he has faced. I make him to see the advantages and use disadvantages to strengthen him to be a better person. "You have to say I have passed through this and that and its possible to overcome and not stay in that situation" that what I always tell him.

NN: In what ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school and at home?

Parent Mt: Things like TV. I supervise that and I tell him that we must reduce the number of hours he spends watching the TV. Another thing he is always up at 4h30 am

every day and comes home at 7h20 pm daily. It is worse if he has sports. He must make best use of time. Infact this year it's better when the year started they had this play practice. Drama practice he was in the drama he is in art and he is in music. For a month of March for the 6 weeks in March he used to sleep at Houghton because they knew that I don't have a car nor have money to hire a car or a meter taxi. They finished at 10pm everyday and there was no way he could be expected to leave school at 10 and wake up the following day at 4h30 and be ready for school. So this family offered that: "If there is anything just let us know" my son can sleep over at their house then go to school the following day. That was this year. But since he started we always had this stress, if he has to leave school at 8pm or 9pm and has to wake up at 4am and has to cope throughout the day for his daily studies it is affecting him greatly. So when he gets home I tell him to take a bath, eat, rest, and sleep. The time for homework is limited. If he has to do his homework it can be when he is waiting for the bus because the bus leaves at 4h30. If he doesn't have sports after school till 4h30 he has to use that time to do homework because the bus leaves at 4h30. Because once he gets home it's that rush: eat, rest, sleep throughout for 5 days. He only gets to rest during holidays if they don't have many assignments. But you can see that even if you try to help him it's not an easy thing for the child. Sometimes you wish he could stay over there where it is closer to the school maybe weekdays latest he will be done with his school work by 6 and have time to rest and do whatever but there is no such thing.

NN: How does the school build personal relationships with you –the parents, build on your strengths, work with your families to improve your child's achievement or help you in your involvement?

Parent Mt: No! (tone),the school is not helping, it's your baby(problem) Like twice, infact three times with my son we were taken home by the principal because we didn't have anyone transport. The people I arranged with could not make it. The principal accompanied us. It was the parents evening which finished at 9pm that was the first time the principal gave us a lift to the taxi rank. The second time they had an art presentation we were there he took us again to the taxi rank and it was not safe for him. We left Sandton at 9pm and he was going to drop us off at the taxi rank and we were still going to take a taxi to the township and my son has to be up at 4h30am. That's daily thing.

I do help him in the subjects that I know where I can like English , business studies but those that I don't know I can't like art he has to sit down and do it by himself in other subjects he has to research they had to make something with wires- structure –to design it he needed a computer and to research but I can't help we tried he tried and

he came up with something on his way to school he sat at the front in a taxi and placed his project at the back seat and this lady (big) set on it and squashed it. It was disfigured and when he got to school he did not submit "it is unacceptable you didn't do your work" the teacher gave it back to him refused to give him a second chance or listen to him. In other things you try he also tries but other things are beyond your control you can't control what happens in the taxi what was he going to do after the lady ruined his project after all the work he had put into doing it.

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent Mt: A lot, a lot. Infact the way I see it the system in the school OBE is hard for us as parents because we were taught through the old education system so now when we have to help with homework and assignments I see that though I would like to help him but I can't help him because I don't know what he is doing. At school they expect that the child will be given help. Sometimes this homework requires him to use the internet and I don't have it. He needs to do research or go to the library; the libraries in the townships aren't equipped as the libraries in towns/suburbs. If he did not manage to go to the library at school or in town and he has this research he has to do. I think the other kids have all these facilities their parents can help them these are the things I need /must have but I can't provide so I just leave things as they are. And this affects him as the other child will get help from their parents, the internet and everything he needs. Because I can't provide these things this disadvantages him.

NN: Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?

Parent Mt: To be supportive in terms of academic his academic life and him, his life and that we communicate and at school. When he started in this program I was working as now I am not employed my family is helping him (financially) things just changed. But we communicate I ask him what is happening, what do you want us to do, our communication is good. I even communicate with the school and SSP. So I think parent involvement is having this one on one and for him to feel free and state where he is lacking. Even if he has done something wrong at school he shouldn't be scared to tell me he has done something then we can talk to find the solution.

NN: Could you share how your involvement influences your child's achievement?

Parent Mt: Yes it does a lot I have seen that his English mark has improved a lot compared to last year this time. Now he reads books even enjoys reading which is something he didn't like. Now he even enjoys reading Macbeth and others he used to be scared of Art history but now he is facing it head on you can see if we could do this have been able to do homework together with more time and ease. He could have been much better but I do see the improvement. Now he sleeps over with this family. If there is something happening in the evening I simply ask them to sleepover the chances are if he come back home he has to wake up very early but that side when the event ends maybe 6h30 I ask that he sleep over and Debbie knows that she will fetch them from school and he will sleepover the support I get from this family has helped a lot because last year I knew that if there is something going on it was just stress because I knew that that day its out because he won't do homework if he didn't do it at school and I can't help him to do his HMW if he comes home at 9h30 and then if I say we should start with his homework by the time we finish it'll be 11h30 and 4h30. I have to wake him up. This has been happening for past 3 years it's important for him to attend these things but they affect him in his academic life.

NN: What is the school's expectations regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?

Parent Mt: Parents meetings, You have to be there for everything: sports, for meetings if there is school events Er.. like they had a play for 2 weeks we had to be there as he was performing and the play used to finish at 10pm what do you do. I can't say: "No my son" as he is performing in the play. Then when the play was over I had tell them (teachers) that I don't have transport. Other parents don't attend school functions because they feel they are a nuisance. There is another boy (Blessing story- his life is not easy –maybe worse than he was in the township) I was expecting the school to help him stay closer to school. The things that these children are faced with are heavy on them it's like they are old people but they are kids. You would expect that as they have been given this opportunity they take it and run with it but to them there is a lot they have to deal with.

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent Mt: No there aren't. It's just the things I have mentioned earlier and the issue of finances as financially I can't provide the other things he needs. Sometimes I would think maybe if he could stay with this family and we could arrange to pay rent. But I can't. When he is there he would have his peers there and they could share something

maybe internet and go to the library during weekends. If there is money you can do those things but I can't ask them to host him because of my financial situation. I wish when he sleepover I could make a contribution but they always say its fine but I don't like it because it's like I am laying my burden on them. The main barrier is money the other stuff I do try I even asked for the email addresses of the teachers so that I ask how can I assist. I always try to be involved. I communicate a lot with the teachers.

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent Mt: SSP I think what they need to check is to find schools in the East Rand that have boarding facilities that will relieve him and give him more time and they need to be bridged and integrated there needs to be some program to integrate them from this public school life style to this because when they come into these schools as teenagers they don't see that they've come to school they tend to relax and have fun where they come from there were no libraries and the facilities they have these blazers make them think they are at the top level whereas they aren't because they have to work as children that destroys them. My son only settled now. I think that disturbs them if they are not integrated the work is so different I don't even think at his primary they even did a comprehension. They did English as 2nd language now they are doing it as 1st/ home language. In poetry needs the basics skills to analyse poetry. At school they assume that he should know this from grade 4/5 and these kids have

SCHOOL C

NUMBER 1

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 18/09/11

Interviewee: Mrs M

Place: Soweto, Pimville

Position of interviewee: Parent School C

Time : 17h00 – 18h00

QUESTIONS

NN: Tell me, what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent M: My aspiration is to see that my child is pass matric. To see him do well and get support he needs from everyone especially me as a mother and SSP as they

promised that they will give support him until he gets to matric, and also get support from the school. I want to see my son passing matric and become what he wants to be and do in life or next year.

SSP 3 years ago arranged for all the schools to have P who are coordinators choose one P a coordinator / liaison that only worked for a few months at my school that could have helped us a lot as Ps that we should meet and get to know about what is happening with our children but that thing just fizzed out SSP is very disorganised

NN: Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.

Parent M: Because he spends most of his time at school you can't monitor him and everything 100%. As a parent, you rely on the school. You rely on the results, and rely 90% on the child. When you get the results, it's only when you find out that this child is not performing. If you ask, he will tell you whatever. When there are school meetings you go there and the teacher tells you about his poor performance, and it's a bit late for me. Why didn't I know about the problem while it was happening so that I could do something and see how I can help the child. For me it has a lot to do with parenting because we don't have enough time to see our children it's a problem for the parents to monitor them. We know that peer pressure also affects them a lot. I believe if a child wants to go somewhere he has to tell me and not lie to me. I will allow him to do anything he want as long as it is within reason. For me it's a bit difficult because he comes home late I cannot monitor his daily activities.

I try to attend meetings but I don't attend all meetings only that I can especially that have to do with him. Sometimes as they (teachers) would say you should secure an appointment and I do that. It's my way of keeping up with his activities to see if he is passing or not. I also see through the marks what is going on. Also, he would tell me: "I have such and such a problem." When I go to have a meeting with the teacher some other teachers are racists. When you talk to them as a parent they would not come out (show racism) but will try to give his reasons why the child did not do well. I always tell him that he must listen to his teachers. Like there was a teacher, I went to the school and I asked him why the boy got such a bad mark he gave his reasons. I try to attend the meetings and I try to speak to the teachers that's the only thing that I do.

NN: In what ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school and at home?

Parent M: Ja, when he comes home we talk about school stuff/work like now he has been home for a month during august holidays. We talked about other things he couldn't do at school. On the first week he said to me he wants to relax. As a working parent I am not at home and I am at work. As a parent you observe these things, I said to him: "You've been home for 2 weeks now but I haven't seen any books or anything." He'll say: "No I am studying." When I come back from work there will be books opened I asked him what he studied then I will take a book and say tell me what this page is about and I'll ask some basic questions like: "Tell me what is happening on this page." But our children are 'clever' they know that you will ask him questions then they'll just open a page with some easy stuff so that when you ask him questions he would be able to give answers. I did as much as I could and eventually he told me that he study too much at school, he wanted to relax from studying for the 4 weeks he spent at home. He only studied for a week and I also observed that he spend much time doing maths because he enjoys maths. The other subjects were took a back sit and he reads a lot. I said its better than nothing because he tried. He said to me he needs a break because when he goes back to school he will be studying I said to him you are not impressing me because if I see you are at home and not you not studying and I ask myself I am here at home and I am forcing you to study what happens when you are at school where there is no one to tell to go study. He tried to convince me that he studies at school but I pushed as much as I could for him to study. So I supervised him and I asked a lot of questions .I don't know you can do whatever you can. They are grownup at this stage you can push as much as you want and make him study but he will get a book whether he studies or not you will never know.

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent M: For me I don't have a problem of being involved in my children's learning I will nag and nag until they became irritated with me. For example as I mentioned earlier he will open a page that has easy stuff because he knows I will ask him question. I don't have a problem with being involved in their learning.

NN: Could you share how your involvement influences your child's achievement?

Parent M: I think it does because the child can see that you are interested in his wellbeing. He knows that if he is not doing well I will be upset. His English mark dropped, before the results were out he told me beforehand that he did not do well in English. He was like warning me. I told him:" It's fine Er..as long as you know where you

went wrong I am proud of you and you are my child and I love you whether you do well or you do badly. Try to do your best; you can't just say your English mark is not good without telling me why they are not good." Er.. I encourage him I think he is afraid to make mistakes but I make him aware that it's ok to make mistakes.

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Parent M: Eish! last year and this year I hardly went to the school. I think it's good because there is more relationship with the Housemaster than the teachers. I don't know. I think he is very involved with the children. The only teacher who gave me his numbers its him and told me to call if I need to talk. The housemaster overall. The teachers when you go to school and talk to them they are very open and willing to help although you can tell others maybe they are reserved or get irritated I don't know when you ask questions you get their help but you can always tell through their body language but they will try to respond

NN: Describe the assistance and support that is offered to you so as to meet these expectations?

Parent M: At school they will sms you if there is a meeting or when the child has not done his homework. I always follow up with him. I'll threaten him that I am coming to the school and scold him in front of his peers. He knows that I will be coming to see the teacher he tries to do that work that the teachers were complaining about because he knows I will come to the school he does not like it that. At his school they also tell me of his wrongdoings. He tries to hide it from but its beyond his control because the school will contact me if he hasn't done something the school will contact you and then I talk to him at home these are the only things I could do basically

NN: How does the school build personal relationships with you –the parents, honour your contribution and build on your strengths, work with families to improve your children's achievement?

Parent M: I think the fact that if the child did not attend school I get an sms it helps a lot the parents will get an sms. The school is helping a lot their communication with the school is excellent – he did not do his music project the school sent me an sms he was shocked that I got to know about it then he went to his music t and explained that he had another project.

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent M: There are barriers, school functions take place in the evening all the time I stay in S and the school is in Sandton. The meetings are always at 6 and are not conducive for me to attend them. When I don't have transport I don't go. It is timing and transport. I think they made them to take place in the evening because it is convenient for a majority of parents but for us who leave far we can't. Another barrier is the number of functions they have. There is always dinner for this, dinner for that and they always have to do with fundraising money (we have to pay). I cannot keep up. I don't have a problem with the fundraising and the times for meetings and all of that but where the money is involved I can't keep up because you pay too much for many things. Too much money is involved, and their meetings they start at 6 and finish at 8 that a barrier for me.

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent M: SSP need to clean up their act. For the past 5yrs I have never had any joy with SSP. They are the main culprits here. They are not organised. We only found out on the 5th of Dec that my son was accepted to the program and is going to St and expected to prepare for the following year. Me and the other lady we used to go and help them out. They have stopped calling us to come and offer them help. They are the ones who are creating problems because they are disorganised. Maybe the choice/selection they make is not OK. Being accepted is a prestige where does the motivation ends/stops? I have helped them a lot I've seen some things that aren't right in terms of being organised. I would always drop my commitment to go there and help. How do the schools choose from the list that S gives them. I think with the selections. Also the behaviour of the children themselves is shocking –it's out of hand mostly girls.

NUMBER 2

Interviewer: Nomusa

Date : 17/09/11

Interviewee: Mrs MD

Place: Voslorus

Position of interviewee: Parent School C

Time : 15h28 – 16h07

Time of interview: 15h28 – 16h07

NN: Tell me, what are your aspirations and expectations regarding your child's learning?

Parent MD: Every parent has good aspirations for his or her children. I would like him to do well not only in school subjects but also to grow emotionally and be able to handle conflicts as he grows. The school is handling that part very well. He has a good relationship with his coach and they discuss other things which bother him that he feels he doesn't want to discuss with me. Maybe because he is a boy and I am a mother.

NN: Could you share the ways in which you encourage, model, reinforce (behaviours) and instruct your child to meet these aspirations and expectations.

Parent MD: Concerning marks, my son performed much better when I had time for him that is in grade 8 to10. But when I didn't have much time for him at grade 11 he started dropping in some of the marks which was an indication to me that maybe he hasn't really developed he still needs to be coached. I must be there all the time to say:” You must do this, you have to do that.” So parent involvement in my kids' education is important for me so that they could discuss the problems they have at school otherwise I miss things out and shift the blame from myself and shift the blame to the teachers or somebody else whereas when I am involved I get to know what is expected of me as a parent from the teachers. They could also tell me why he is not achieving what he has set out to achieve. I want him to do the best he can. When he can't perform as I expect he must be free to tell me what is the problem, In grade 11 he didn't do well because I didn't have much time for him because I thought he can do it on his own then I said well I have to go back to the drawing board and be more involved than ever because he would say he has done his HMW when he has not.

NN: In what ways are you as parents involved in your children's education at school and at home?

Parent MD: I am a working parent I try by all means to find out about homework. But I think I remember when he was in grade 8 I was more involved then than I am now at grade 12 because I don't understand most of his subjects. At times I think he has to go and do things himself but I try by all means to ask: "Isn't there any homework? Have you done your homework?" At times you find that kids could dodge you and run away from their HMW and watch the TV or do something else then you need to find out as a parent when the child comes back from school especially between 16h30 and 18h00 children should be doing their homework. Then if he is doing it, I'll just go around to see what he is doing ask a few questions about what he is doing. If he need my help then I'll definitely help him.

I also check his work ask why the marks are not good and if he 'll need extra lessons or if he is attending the school's extra lessons.

NN: What are your feelings regarding parent involvement as parents of secondary school learners?

Parent MD: It depends, some secondary schools for instance where my son is, they (the school) invite you to be involved in the child's education. They say whether its parent's evenings or whether its sports they tell you what is going to happen. Er.. they let you know so that you are aware of what is going to happen if you don't respond either by writing or coming to attend those things they get worried. I feel that the school is doing the bit that it should do and where I feel the school is not doing what it should do and involve me as a parent I would go to the school and discuss it with them either with the school teacher or with the ssp coordinator just to find out , if I'm not happy about something I make them aware that I am not happy about something concerning my child.

Which other areas or aspects of school matters would you like to be involved in?

NN: Tell me, what does the notion of parental involvement mean to you?

Parent MD: As a parent means I have got to be involved in my child's education whether its sports I've got to be involved. Er.. school subject I've got to be involved not to be involved because the child has passed even when the C has not passed I've got to be involved to find out what are the causes and how can I help. Being involved in his learning at sec school helps me to understand him more

NN: Would you please explain about the cases where the school did not involve you as a parent?

Parent MD: Cases like when they've got day trips and they don't involve you as much as you think they should do be involved. You find that by word of mouth they will tell the kids that you must tell your parents children like children they wont do it they will forget to tell you and you only find out that Awu! I should have been there for him but when they have written it down it does help to remind oneself that there is a rugby match on such and such a day if the Parental support is needed at times they do say but when they didn't say but if you find that some parents were there and you say Wow I should have been there for my son as well but I didn't know. I wasn't aware

NN: Could you share how your involvement influences your child's achievement?

Parent MD: I'm not sure but I think it does if I don't attend the meetings I lose out on some of the things that were discusses and teachers think I don't care and not interested discussing with teachers they will get to know what is the problems

NN: How is the relationship between you and the school, and you and your child?

Parent MD: Average not perfect

NN: What are the schools' expectation regarding your involvement? Is it written in black and what? Verbally related to you?

Parent MD: The school does I also do have expectation as the school does the school expects me as a P to attend meetings that have been scheduled to inquire about the progress of the child Er... to be involved in sporting activities one way or another by supporting my child if I can sometimes I can't because I am working but I expect also as a P if there is something that happened at school I expect the school to tell me and not hide things from me – things like disciplinary actions that have been taken like detentions being naughty in the classroom because he won't tell me because I'll scold him the school has to make a point that they do inform me in one way or another either by telephone or .. because that's a sensitive thing when he's been in detention if they write it in his homework book he might not give it to me but if they try to get hold of me either by the phone and inform me that your son has done or not done this be aware of

this but I might say in most cases in the school where he is they do inform me they try by all means to let us know as parents so that we could be involved be serious results.

NN: Would you describe the assistance and support that is offered to you so as to meet these expectations?

I think the school does give us assistance as parents for instance if boys go out of the way and they let us know to alert us know of the things that are happening –drug abuse –please de aware they offer counseling if you need those they do offer support to a certain extent keep us informed –newsletters the school organise for the boy to be accommodated for the night by parents who leave in the suburbs if they had a trip and the boys returned late –township boys

NN: What barriers prevent proper parent involvement in the school?

Parent MD: Social upbringing where I come from not really blocking me but at times I feel little bit ashamed to talk about issues in the school that could be coupled with doubt as a parent –I’m not sure whether I could discuss this how could I let the school know this about my son – educational level I feel not really embarrassed my children know more than I do –how can I be involved in something that I have no knowledge of . the resources –most of the meetings they occur at night /evenings at school it’s not that I don’t want to go to the meetings and time I back from work exhausted and find it hard to go to those meeting as a working Parent

These schools don’t understand the African of raising the family they want us to conduct ourselves the westernised way therefore I doubt whether I can share some of the things with the teachers because I feel they won’t understand

What can the school do to facilitate parent involvement and make it more effective?

NN: Do you think there is something we should have discussed but we did not?

Parent MD: No

GROUP DISCUSSION

Interviewer: Nomusa

Time: 13h22

Position of interviewee: SSP Coordinator

Date: 16/08/2011

Place: SJC

Interviewee: Mrs JM, School A; Mrs WM School A (assistant coordinator); Mrs BL, School B; Mrs N. P, School C

WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER AS YOUR ROLE AS AN SSP COORDINATOR?

JM: Liaison with SSP, assisting boys and parents with social and academic problems, administration of paperwork for SSP.

WM: Ja, also to help to encourage parents, to make parents to be involved in their children's education to support them during cultural or sports days. To keep them (parents) informed on what is going on with their children's progress. If they (learners) are not doing well they must motivate their children because as they stay with them most of the time. I encourage them to be involved in what is happening at school and their children's lives. That is why I was selected so if they don't understand English but now they have me to speak in their own languages. I am calling the parents about the July results after this and telling them to encourage their children to study during these holidays.

PL: For me, I consider my role as an SSP Coordinator as a very important one because it is a position where I am able to help these kids and also to arm them and empower them about the new environment that they have entered. Cause truly speaking I am one of the fortunate people who has taught in different environments so I know that most of the SSP boys or students come from the disadvantaged families and when they come to these schools or this environment they are overwhelmed by the way things are.

It is both academic and socio-economic because academically. We know that most of our township schools do not have all the necessities to the teaching environment to be conducive so when they come to the private schools everything is new. Sometimes you find that they are unable even to use those facilities and sometimes they are being despised by other students. Er...and they somehow take the back stance and be embarrassed of not being able to. Secondly the socio economic one its very overwhelming because the parents, the students here come from very rich families and

they've got everything which our kids from the townships do not have and if these kids are not well guided and if they aren't well taught those things might tempt them and find that at some stage some are even tempted to steal or that are even tempted to behave or to copy trying to imitate or trying to get some of the things that they cannot acquire.

BL: Most of the things have been mentioned but reiterate, I see my role as SSP coordinator as the "go-between"/liaison between SSP and the school. Any information that the SSP wish to divulge to learners, is forwarded to me and I will make sure the learners get it. There are several people "involved", so I liaise with them to get consent e.g. the attendance at a SSP presentation, permission to leave school early or miss sport practice.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT IS WRITTEN-BLACK AND WHITE AS YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION?

PL: No sometimes it was verbal sometimes I use my own discretion or initiative. Maybe.. How about you J?

JM: No, You just have to use your own discretion.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

WM: I think parents must be involved in their children's education so that children can be motivated. The child would think, at least my father and my mother is aware whether I am performing or not performing or they can to the extent to help me with school projects and homework. If they need to do research they can take them to the companies or where they can get them to places where they can get resources to do their research. In all it's about motivation and support.

JM: It means paying their portion of minimal fees, encouraging their boys to work, attending school/SSP meetings

BL: To me, Parental involvement involves a parent being hands on in terms of his/her son's education. Not nosey and domineering, but informed, and available.

PL: Er.. I always try my best to involve the parents from the beginning because every time before we start, the school starts or the year starts I will have an interview with the boy and the parents. I sit down with the parents and make them aware of the

environment and what is expected of them and mostly what I will encourage them to do is to support their kids, to come to academic evenings. to come to sports so that their children can see that they are behind them and that they are also interested in their wellbeing.

At the beginning the parents seem to be very keen. First of all as I have said that this is a very overwhelming. A very different environment. First of all the parents are also very surprised by the environment, surprised in a sense that they might be excited that their children have joined the elite school and so on. Maybe they will tell the family members and community that their children are attending this school. First of all they will be excited of the experience or the environment their children find themselves in and then E ..secondly some parents become a bit scared. E.. wondering if their children will cope in this environment then that is the time I think my interview with them helps a lot because I will sit down as I have said initially. I am fortunate that I was teaching at the location (township)so I know exactly the difference between the schools in the location and the private elite schools so I will sit down with the parents and tell them exactly of my experience in these schools and help them by telling them that it is very important to give their children the good basics good grounds of morals. Also to make their children aware and be proud of who they are and where they come from so that they don't forget where they come from. They know they are there in the school not to compete with anyone but for academics. So I think that helps a lot because the parents also do not have to stretch themselves because sometimes these students will take chances to the parents to buy the everything so that they can fit , compete or to match with environment . So I am there to allay the fears of the parents that their children do not have to, if those things are there it is a nice thing but it's not the necessity. The main focus is the academic.

IN WHAT FORMS DOES PARENT INVOLVEMENT TAKE (AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME)?

BL: As a teacher of teenagers (and mother to two ex-teenagers) I am aware of the stresses and pressures our young people encounter on a daily basis. Knowing your child, being aware of his challenges, and being accessible to him/her make all the difference.

MOD: In school parents must be informed on what is going on at school because kids sometimes lie sometimes they don't give them newsletters. They may also be involved

in PTA so that they can also help. When the child sees his parents involved maybe making tea for visitors he become encouraged and motivated.

At home to help during homeworks to check their books even if they don't understand they can ask questions, if they see that the child is bunking they can communicate with the teachers involved who might not be aware that they are bunking classes.

Two days ago I called them about the results and advice and that they must study during holidays. They (parents) were so happy. Parent involvement starts from home motivating, reminding kids: are the sports things ready for the following day organised things, motivate, show child that you know what is happening at school.

JM: Most parents do not have their sons at home – the boys board. but the parents do come to meetings. Some parents are unfortunately not very supportive – due to social and economic constraints.

WHAT IS THE REASON DO YOU THINK PARENTS, SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

WM: Yes, if they start to be mischievous they know that the parents know what is going on from Monday to Friday their activities and their school time table/periods even during weekend outings they should know where they are and doing and with who

JM: It is essential for the academic performance and ethical behaviour of the boys. Important for the boy's self- image.

HOW IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE SSP PARENTS, PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN?

JM: Very good – but labour intensive

Mod: At the moment It's a moderate relationship we are still pushing to make the relationship between the parents and SSP to be a good relationship

Sometimes other parents are scared to meet with their children's teachers. Even if they come to school they know that there is somebody to talk to they approach me if they are scared to talk I accompany them to the housemasters. I can go with them to the housemaster as I understand their culture and where they come from.

BL: On the whole I think the relationship between the school and SSP parents is good. I am not aware of anything to the contrary. It's a relationship of trust: Parents trust us to give the best to their children.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL EXPECT FROM FAMILIES? HOW DOES THE SCHOOL ASSIST AND SUPPORT FAMILIES TO DO WHAT'S EXPECTED? HELP AT HOME

JM: Expectations from parents include moral support, encouragement, participation in school events, and payment of parents' portions of fees.

BL: In my opinion the most important expectation is open and honest communication, keeping one's word. Once that is established, I have seen my school bend over backwards to accommodate families. Assistance is given when necessary and reasonable.

PL: Ja, I think that is all.

HOW DOES THE SCHOOL BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH SSP FAMILIES, HONOUR FAMILIES' CONTRIBUTION, BUILD ON THEIR STRENGTHS AND WORK WITH FAMILIES TO IMPROVE LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT?

JM: Constant communication – two teachers, housemasters, two account assistants and a special parent communicator constantly communicate with the parents. the services of the school psychologist is called in when necessary. the director of academic studies is also fully involved.

BL: We are always available, and ready to listen. Plans are put in place to allow the learners to attend evening prep sessions (and enjoy a meal), transport is arranged after late functions, etc.

PL: Er..

HOW DOES THE PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT INFLUENCE LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT?

Mod: It does if a parent knows what she must do to help the child to achieve, the child is encouraged. They can also help with projects and pay /get resources to help the child- get good results.

The parent involvement is seen one case of one learner the parents were not aware that he was not performing and we phoned the parents they called to tell us that they spoke to him his results improved.

PL: I would say it does because just generally besides that these boys are from SSP and so on just generally if the parents are not showing interest in the child's learning the child will also tend to relax, hiding or taking advantage that the parents do understand what is happening. So as I said the SSP parents are very much involved they seem to know what is happening with their children at school and give them the necessary support that they need.

Ps who are there and are interested in the child's work will be able to monitor and if there is anything wrong or if there is anything the Ps are able to spot it immediately because they are involved I think another thing I would also like to mention is that concept where are one of their officials would come to school maybe every once at the beginning of the term to try and find out how the boys have done and their I think also the SSP plays a role because the boys know that if they don't work hard and if they don't do well SSP will There is disciplinary committee also have extra lessons and psychologists that work with them.

JM: Improves the academic performance and ethical behaviour of the boys. Improves boys' integration in different school environment.

IN WHICH WAY DO YOU ASSIST THE PARENTS TO BE AWARE OF THEIR ROLE IN EDUCATION?

WM: Making comments on the reports parents become aware of

PL: Ja .. the school does the only thing or I think the responsibility lies with the Coordinator I would think that if these learners fail academically or in any other department I would say it has to do with the support that they get from the Coordinator because I don't think there is anything specifically that the school does. So the learners are put in the same environment they are treated like the other learners not taking into consideration that the learners are from a different environment thus it is the role of the Coordinator to help all the learners to adjust. So with me my boys are fortunate because I am as I have said that I understand where they are. Maybe you will find that in other schools the learners are not as lucky as these are because maybe there is the conflict of interest maybe the problem is with the Coordinator who does not understand the culture or the background of the Learners, where the SSP Learners are coming from. You will find that clash I think caused by not understanding the Learners or the

Learners not understanding the Coordinator or the CO not understanding their behaviour or culture.

JM: As I mentioned earlier –mostly it is communication

WHAT BARRIERS PREVENT PROPER PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL?

BL: The biggest obstacle to constructive parental involvement is when the parent herself/himself is incapable to give assistance through financial constraints, lack of education etc. This is often the case with our SSP parents. Absent parents (living in different provinces or far from the school) impact negatively.

WM: Communication parent are not educated and they don't understand what is expected of them and the school fails to inform parents what they expect from them

I have never seen anything

PL: There is, mostly it's the issue of transport because some of these things like academic things and the other things happen at night and then the parent who come mostly from the township most of them are immobile they don't have cars so that be a stumbling block of a parent to become involved in the progress of their children

JM: Some parents are apathetic – due to extreme poverty, and cultural differences. also some parents live far away – Polokwane, for instance.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO ENCOURAGE PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

JM: I think that we are doing all we can – even assisting indigent parents with taxi fares, etc

MD: I do talk to them I know they are busy during weekends to come to see boys in sports but they have to attend P evenings. If they have problems with transport the school can help, we re- reimburse them for transport fares. There is no excuse for not coming to Parent evening and speech night even sports.

PI: To try by all means even those who can't come during the evening maybe they can make prior arrangement to come and see whoever is in charge of whoever teacher they would like to see or the headmaster about their children and not hide behind the issue of transport they have to be pro-active to show that they are interested in the learning process and also maybe finding out and make some follow ups if they were unable to come they can also phone if they can't come to school they must phone and show that

they are interested because unfortunately even if maybe some people might shy away from this the teachers also A.. become biased I wouldn't say become biased buy the teachers become very concerned if the parents of these children do not attend and they teachers conclude by saying the parents are not keen instead of maybe thinking or trying to find out what makes the parent not to be able to come. I would say to the teachers sometimes themselves tend to have attitude towards these children if their parents do not come and find that they are always given a second hand treatment and sometimes when I say this this makes me to think of as I was having my Er.. my interviews with boys some teachers if the boys or maybe if the parents do not seem to show any interest some teachers even tell them that your parents should not forget that you are here because of scholarship and not anything else so those teachers who are very quick to take eh very quick to judge who are very judgmental and very quick to Er... how could I say very quick to demotivate these kids and instead of maybe trying to sit down with them and finding out what the problem is so they become inactive and not interested in the learning of the child and also do not seem to be interested.

BL: I concur with Mrs P. Ja..

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THOSE SITUATIONS, WHO IS SUPPOSED TO TAKE CARE OF THE SITUATION?

PI: It's me as a Coordinator not the teachers unfortunately teachers do not mind or do not care the teachers just see children learning or children in the learning situation so that all they don't take them as different form the learning from other learners if the parents come or don't come some teachers don't mind but others will make a follow up but on SSP project it is the duty of the Coordinator to make a follow up what I normally do is to phone the PS and then try to find out and if there is any info that I can pass it over to the teachers or HDM but the SSP Er... does not have time is not always there to supervise they also

DO YOU THINK THERE IS SOMETHING WE SHOULD HAVE DISCUSSED BUT WE DID NOT?

JM: YES. The selection process and follow up of poor performing students are not addressed. Some students are not suitable due to poor performance or behavioural problems, yet they are allowed to continue. The parameters should be adhered to. Unfortunately SSP as an organization has also had some managerial problems, and this has impacted on the school and its learners.

WM: I think parents must prioritise the school can do much they need to push its work it depend on the parents they must know that they must prioritise their other commitment and their children's education

PI: During interviews with the parents I find that parents have high aspirations for their children because first of all particularly in our school they are using the fact that the child is in this school which as a tool where their child will achieve a goal or a dream he has been having for some time because truly there are far better than other children who attend school in government locations schools so I think that is the time when the parents feel that the you know er that is the time when them as the Ps and their Children's goals will be fulfilled . Some Ps think that their Children will be able maintain whatever grades they have been achieving in their schools and some think that their Children will be even better but having said that it sometimes a pity because you might find the boy has been doing well in other school but when he comes to our school he will slide because the grades are different sometimes I think it affects the spirit it does affect the aspirations of the parents because now the boy who has been doing well now that boy is not coping academically so it has a positive and negative effect because the parents become discouraged and some come positive that their children ...

They might think that their children are not working to their required standards whilst forgetting that these children have different challenges but as a COI I am may allay their fears instead of taking it negatively that must be obstacle let me say a tool that they use to motivate their children that they must stop comparing their pre experience with this one because it is a different and a very challenging one so those Ps who can take their children for extra lessons and those who cant must ehm encourage their children to attend the schools extra lessons because each and every Department has its own extra lessons so I think that is how they can cope I am saying that both the children who attend school here are very privileged you find that the boys who are privileged attend extra lessons from school and they also have private tutors and that is why they are doing so well so fortunately the SSP ones some but not have tutors but it's a Ps role to motivate the child to cope.

APPENDIX F

PARENTS

CATEGORY/CODES/THEMES	A	A	A	A	A	B	B	B	B	C	C	
<p style="text-align: center;">PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT HOME</p> <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talk about his social life ▪ Talk about his aspirations, future plans ▪ Discuss marks and report ▪ Communicate aspirations and concerns to the learner ▪ Ask about school work, being informed about projects test dates ▪ Why he is not doing well/identify problem areas ▪ how can I help, <p>Supervision :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check/ask if he has homework has he done it ▪ Check his books, help where I can ▪ Force/Tell the learner to go study ▪ Monitor that he is studying ▪ Ask questions on what he is studying ▪ Supervise: cut TV <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage learner to do well, improve his marks ▪ Guide direct make him focused ▪ Set standards –rules expectations: specify marks learner should obtain ▪ Tell learner to ask questions when not understand ▪ Use rewards –(carrot) for work well done . improvement in marks/results ▪ Withdraw or withhold things ▪ Praise the learner ▪ Being there for the learner/supportive <p>Organise that learner gets help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peers ▪ Tutor <p>Relationship with their children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enforce rules: not to go as they please ask permission ▪ Being observant know the learner ▪ Enforce religion ▪ Sit down and plan together 	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
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SSP COORDINATORS (EDUCATORS)			
A	A	A	C
<p>Role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with SSP. • Assisting boys and parents with social & academic problems. • Administration of paperwork for SSP • Encourage parents to be involved in their children's education and their social lives • Keep parents informed on learners progress and what is going on at school • Empower, help, prepare learners and parents to adapt to the new environment • Communicate with parents if there is a concern • Inform parents of the services available to them and their children at the school • Assisting indigent parents with taxi fares, etc 	•	•	•
<p>PARENT INVOLVEMENT Schools' expectations of parents At school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying their/ parents' portions portion of minimal fees. • Attending school/SSP meetings • Attend sports, cultural activities, school functions • Support learners in sporting activities, academic • Volunteer at school • Being informed about what is going on at school and the child • Communicate with teachers, Communicate with SSP coordinator if they have concerns • Get resources to help learners result to improve • Show interest in the child's learning • Participation in school events • Priorities their children's education • Become members of PTA/PA <p>At home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with homework, projects • Check books • Ask questions • Supervision • Know where they are, doing what and with who • Provide basic needs • Give boys a good ground of morals • Discuss school work with their children • Encourage learners to attend extra lessons offered at school • Get tutor for their children • Encouraging their boys to work. • Motivating learners 	•	•	•

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide moral, emotional support • Motivate learners to cope in the challenging environment 				
			<p>NECESSITY OF PI/ IMPACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic performance improves • Ethical behaviour • Boys self-image • Improves boys' integration in different school environment. <p>BARRIERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most parents do not have their sons at home – the boys board some parents are apathetic – due to extreme poverty, and cultural differences. • Some live far away • Some parents are unfortunately not very supportive – due to social and economic constraints. • Transport • School functions in the evening • Parents level of education • School failing to inform parents what is expected of them • Teachers attitudes –judgemental to non-attending parents • No follow up why the parents are not involved • SSP coordinators also have normal jobs- increase workload • Parents becoming discouraged by learners results-(comparison) forgetting about the leap from government to private schools 				

APPENDIX G

	Epstein's Model	Comer's SDP	Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler's Theory
	<p>The theory of overlapping spheres suggests that the three spheres of influence in the child's development; the families, the schools and the community share goals and mission and their partnership pushes the spheres together resulting in <i>school-like families</i> and <i>family-like schools</i>. These spheres can be drawn together or pulled apart</p>	<p>The School Development Programme framework for change is based on the theory that a learner's academic performance, behaviour and preparation for school and life can be greatly improved when the adult stakeholders work together in a respectful, collaborative way in order to create a school climate or culture that supports development, good instruction, and academic learning.</p>	<p>The model provides a theoretical framework from which to examine predictors of parental involvement which include parents' beliefs in their roles and abilities, parents' perception of invitations to involvement and life context variables such as time and energy, knowledge and skills.</p> <p>The school could use this information to enhance and make parent involvement more effective</p>
Differences	<p>Typology of parent involvement suggests six ways of involving parents which teachers may use as guidelines for developing programmes that offer opportunities for family and community participation in their schools</p>	<p>Provides three levels of parental participation were created Specify the composition, structure and roles of the teams that have to be formed in schools to promote partnership between teachers and parents get involved in the school to set up the teams Suggests that staff development be organised for teachers as needed to achieve goals The programme is also used in school improvement endeavours</p>	<p>Addresses why the parents become involved in their children's learning</p> <p>Parents' perception of learner invitations in the academic domain made significant contributions to the prediction of parent involvement at home.</p>
Limitations	<p>Inconsistent definitions of parent involvement resulted in different researches yielding different results</p>	<p>The program theory may be correct in many of its predictions about student changes in psychological and social outcomes, but not achievement. However, achievement gains were found in schools with a more explicit academic focus, suggesting that improving this focus should be as central to Comer's program theory as improving a school's social climate. Even more needed, though, are ways to improve program implementability.</p>	<p>Doesn't provide a specific framework on how a parent involvement programme can be formed but information that could strengthen parent involvement programs</p>
Similarities	<p>Necessity of parent involvement and community involvement in learners education even in secondary school A collaborative relationship between all stakeholders is important The school has the responsibility to reach out, initiate and sustain these relationships between parents and teachers List different forms of parent involvement at home and in school. Secondary school parents want to be involved in their children's learning but lack the know how The school should design and run a programme to involve parents Parent involvement has an impact on learners achievement</p>		