



**Teacher Expectations of Parental Involvement in Learner Education: Perceptions of Primary School Teachers in Mpumalanga Province.**

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This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Science in the discipline of Counselling Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

**DECLARATION**

I, Tumelo Remember Mathebula(student number: 215068692) declare that this research titled “*Teacher Expectations of Parental Involvement in Learner Education: Perceptions of Primary School Teachers in Mpumalanga Province*” is my own work, and that all sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research report to the following people:

- My late mother Laizah Nhломulo Matlhabane. I believe that you are proud of your daughter wherever you are.
- My one and only brother, Daniel. Dear brother, you are my inspiration, you so much wanted to see me an educated woman even though you have never reached the level that I am today
- The next generation including my upcoming children, nephews and nieces. They are the future, and I would like them to learn from this work to always strive to make a positive change in our communities.

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## **ABSTRACT**

There is a need to improve communication between teachers and parents regarding their respective roles in assisting learners to perform well academically. When these roles are not communicated clearly between the two stakeholders, often they blame one another especially when the learner does not perform as expected. Likewise, literature has shown that when parents and teachers are aware of their roles in the learners' education, they tend to behave in ways that promote learners' educational attainment. It is against this background that this qualitative study on teachers' perceptions on parental involvement was conducted to mitigate the possible undesirable effects of blame shifting when learners perform poorly.

The study also seeks to pinpoint ways in which teachers expect parents to be involved in their children's education so that these expectations could be communicated with parents. Six semi-structured interviews (three from each school) were conducted with teachers from the two selected schools in Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga province. The findings of the study have shown that although not all parents are fully committed in partnering with the schools, the teachers admitted that parents are important partners in the learning of their children because they are equally equipped to assist with schoolwork when learners are at home.

In addition, the study explored ways in which the roles that parents are expected to play are communicated to them. It was found that teachers use both verbal and written modes to engage with parents. The factors that contribute to poor parental involvement in learners' education were also explored in this study. These factors need to be addressed so that measures could be taken to overcome them. Lastly, recommendations were made for the schools under study as well policy makers, to consider when formulating policies for the governance of schools.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

DoE: Department of Education

EU: European Union

MPDoE: Mpumalanga Department of Education

NDoE: National Department of Education

NDP: National Development Plan

SBM: School Based Management

SGB: School Governing Body

SES: Socio Economic Status

RSA: Republic of South Africa

## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

South Africa became a true democracy in 1994 after decades of inequality and oppression (Mncube, 2009). South Africa's Department of Education published a White Paper on Organisation, Governance and Funding of schools as part of the transformation process to foster democratic institutional management at school level (Department of Education, 1996b). All stakeholder groups were accorded active responsible roles to encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision-making and importantly, parents were included as part of this process (Mncube, 2009).

Prior to 1994, the education of black learners in South Africa was managed by the Department of Education (DoE) wherein parental involvement was not encouraged (Ramadikela, 2012). This kind of system could have made it almost impossible for parents to develop positive attitudes towards their children's education as they were not considered to be part of school systems. Nevertheless, the new political dispensation, after the 1994 elections, brought changes in all spheres of government, including education. The promulgation of the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996, gave parents the legal right to become actively involved in school matters and their children's education (DoE, 1996b). It is through this Act that the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGB's) was recognised in order to allow parents to become actively involved in their children's academic progress. The post-1994 introduced significant movement that impacted on parent involvement in education (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004a). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) introduced the democratisation of the education system by describing the concept of parent, setting requirements for schools related to

parents' right to information, unfolding basic parental duties as well as providing for parent and community representation in mandatory SGB's.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education (MPDoE) in particular also has made efforts to call in parents and guardians of children who are in primary schools to partake in the election of SGBs which takes place every three years (MPDoE, 2015). In her speech in 2015, the Mpumalanga Member of Executive Council (MEC) of Education, Reginah Mhaule stated that the SGB has the authority to decide on school policies such as the medium of instruction, discipline measures, and religious policies. Scholars have also argued the position of parents in SGB's. Van Wyk (2007) indicated that parents in SGB have been placed in the position to influence the school budget, discipline, language policy, and the appointment and promotion of teaching and administrative staff. Mncube (2009) also listed the functions that the SGB has to fulfil. These included the development of a mission statement for the school, promotion of the best interests of the school, creation of an environment conducive to teaching and learning, safety and security of learners, assurance of quality education for learners, and decisions on disciplinary action, school uniform policy as well as policy regarding determination of school fees. Having an SGB component in schools allows all stakeholders including parents to develop a sense of ownership of the school and thus take responsibility for what is happening at the school (Bean & Apple, 1999).

Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004a) confirmed the need for a broader conceptualisation of parental involvement which includes parental participation in school governance. Although it is crucial that parents participate in school governance and leadership, Okeke (2014) reasoned that the involvement of parents in the education of their children appears to be more productive than when parents are only active in school governance. Based on this, it is questionable to conclude that a

well-functioning SGB where parents are actively involved would yield positive results in terms of learners' academic performance. Okeke (2014) noted that it is possible that learners experience poor learning outcomes and low achievement even in schools where the SGBs are very effective and efficient. Lemmer (2007) also found that governance arrangements with parents' component do not improve student achievement. This finding suggests that there is a clear distinction that exists between parental involvement in the governing of the school and parents' involvement in the academic world of their children. Thus one would conclude that parents' participation in the education of children appears to have a stronger influence on learners' academic performance than merely parental involvement in the SGB.

In an attempt to give parents the responsibility to manage their children's schools beyond governance issues, Singh, Mbokazi and Msila (2004) contended that the SASA 84 of 1996 created the expectation that parents be in partnership with the schools as part of the process of rebuilding the school system. In this way, the government was not only aiming at getting parents to take charge of their children's lives but also legitimise parental involvement and participation in their children's academic lives (HSRC & EPC, 2005). According to Naong and Morolong (2011), the need for parental involvement in schools has provided the drive for the introduction of a fresh perspective on education in South Africa, giving parents a more profound role to play in their children's education. From this view, there is no doubt that the passing of the SASA 84 of 1996 shifted the responsibility of decision making from the principal and teachers, with minimal participation from parents, to a more decentralised and co-operative approach. The latter implies that parents must now participate in school activities (Naong & Morolong, 2011). It also implies that parents now have the capacity to determine what is in the best educational interest of their children (Naong & Morolong, 2011).

It goes without question that if learners are to maximize their educational potential, they will need the full support of their parents. Several studies have shown a positive academic achievement among learners who have involved parents (Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Whitaker & Fiore, 2001). The above authors were of the opinion that parental involvement plays an important role in learner's success. In fact, Henderson and Berla (1994) argued that family involvement appears to be a greater predictor of learner's overall achievement. Dekker and Lemmer (1996) advised that parents can be actively involved in home learning activities which in turn may provide them with an opportunity to teach and guide their children as well as being their role models. With the growing body of substantial evidence to indicate that parents' involvement in children's education can make a significant difference in the educational attainment of these children, the SASSA 84 of 1996 therefore desired to empower and encourage parents outside the school premises to be fully involved in their children's education (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

Although South Africa appears to be ready in preparation for a democratic education system, there are still major obstacles that need to be dealt with in terms of meaningful parental involvement in education (Naong & Morolong, 2011). The two alarming issues will be highlighted here according to the literature reviewed. Firstly, Heystek (2006) argued that the concept of parental involvement in schools is relatively new for many schools in South Africa, particularly in the historically disadvantaged schools. Mncube (2005) revealed that this situation has led to a lack of black parental participation, as parents had no wish to interfere in professional matters due to the legacy of the apartheid education system, in which parents were expected to be obedient, compliant and submissive towards the teachers. During this apartheid era, Naong and Morolong (2011) argued that the majority of parents upheld and embraced such

virtues to live by, and this has led to their voices not being recognised in their children's education.

Secondly, given the different ethnic groups in South Africa, Clase, Kok and Van Der Merwe (2007) indicated that the decision of parents to participate in their children's education can be complex as the phenomenon of parental involvement can carry different meanings for different people due to the cultural diversity in the country. Brown and Duku (2008, p. 434) also agreed that "not everybody understands the notion of parental participation in the same way". Nevertheless, Bandlow (2009) was certain that parents could contribute knowledge and insight that complement that of school staff in the hope to strengthen academic and social programmes. However, this can only succeed if parents are part of a contextually focused school improvement process aimed at creating positive relationships that support children's total development (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

With these issues being highlighted above, it is in the interest of this research to find out if the perceptions and expectations on parental involvement of the teachers under study are congruent with those of the parents of their learners. Many parents are not certain on how to assist their children in education (Dekker & Lemmer, 1996). Henderson and Berla (1994) posited that a gap continues to exist in parental involvement as evidence to suggest how parents should be involved in learners' education is under-researched. Epstein and Becker (1982) reported that the possible explanation for why schools report unclear involvement from parents may result from differences between teachers and parents regarding the parents' role. According to Marphatia, Edge, Legault and Archer (2010), both parents and teachers fundamentally agree that their collaboration can lend valuable support to children's learning. However, since the perceptions they have of one another's role in education may differ, there is often dissatisfaction over unmet

expectations (Marphatia et al., 2010). It is for these reasons that this study seeks to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of parents' respective roles in their children's education.

In addition, Baker (1997) indicated that while researchers such as Epstein (1995), Henderson and Berla (1984) agreed that parental involvement is a requisite for children's school success, there is little consensus about what constitutes effective parent involvement. In other words, Baker (1997) posited that no one concept has emerged to dominate research and practice on parental involvement in education. As a result, confusion persists concerning the activities, goals and desired outcomes of various parental involvement programs and practices. This could be that parents usually have surprisingly few opportunities to share their unique and valuable perspective on what parental involvement means to them and what they need to make school-home partnerships work (Marshall & Jackman, 2015). To address this issue, this study was conducted with teachers from two selected schools under Bohlabela District in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, to explore their perceptions on parental involvement. The goal of the study was to build on and extend the growing foundation of theory and practice concerning strengthening school-home collaborative partnerships.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Studies conducted worldwide have shown that parental involvement in learners' education have implications for learners' educational decision and involvement in learning (Olatayo & Ogunkola, 2008; Sylvia, Scott, Totsika, Erelly-Stevens, & Crook, 2008; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). However, in the South African context the silence of parents in their children's education has been continuing (Lemmer, 2012). This silence could be the cause and effect of

having a limited parental role in education, which in turn affects the relationship between parents and teachers. It is true that whilst there is existing literature on parental involvement in children's education, it is not clear whether there is a common understanding about what this involvement means. Said differently, the role that parents are expected to play in their children's education remains unclear. Chen, Kyle, and McIntyre (2008) noted that parents usually do not know the responsibility they have on their children's learning in order to improve these children's academic performance. Feiler et al. (2008) affirmed that the teachers expect parents to participate in a specific manner in order to enhance their children's performance at school, but still fail to communicate clearly the manner in which parents are supposed to help their children. This lack of communication as confirmed by Feiler et al. (2008) may result in problems between these two stakeholders as parents may get involved in ways that are not satisfactory to the teachers, resulting in unmet needs. This emerging trend is particularly worrisome given the fact that there is limited research that speaks to teachers' expectations of parental involvement (Kim, Park, & Cozart, 2012).

Other researchers such as Marshall and Jackman (2015) reported that when these expectations are not clear, it does not only influence the fostering of strong school-home partnership but also children's academic success as they believe that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. Chen et al. (2008) described school curriculum as the most apparent barrier to parental involvement. According to these authors, the school curriculum is expected to have changed frequently and far-reaching since the days when the parents were learners themselves. Consequently, a national representative study conducted by Strawhun, Olson, Kane and Peterson (2014) revealed that how these parents are to understand their role within the new curriculum policy may be challenging and overwhelming for them. In light of the above, this study

intended to explore teachers' perceptions of how parents should play their role in their children's education. It is crucial that parents become aware of their roles in their children's education so that they can be able to meet the expectations of teachers, whereby learning and teaching could be facilitated effectively.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

The findings of the study will to a larger extent be useful to the parents, learners, as well as practitioners in the National Department of Education such as teachers at primary level, policy makers and future researchers. This research can add value in that it has the potential to assist the National Department of Education to make informed decisions when formulating policies regarding parental involvement in school activities. In particular, policy makers may be able to use the findings to draw up policies on how teachers can involve parents in education, and to communicate better in terms of what is expected of these parents. This could minimise the confusion that often arises between what teachers expect from parents and what parents are actually expected to do regarding their children's education. Such communication could help establish a healthy working relationship between teachers and parents.

If there is clarity in terms of what parents are expected to do and these expectations are properly communicated, the parents may be able to align their involvement with the teachers' expectations. The parents will have a better understanding regarding the roles that they are expected to play so as to improve their children's academic performance. Parents will also gain more insight on the phenomenon. This will enable parents to respond positively and effectively

towards extending a helping hand to learners who fall victim to poor academic performance due to lack of parental involvement.

The learners will also benefit from this study as parents and teachers recognise their respective roles in learners' education. Having said this, learners will receive coordinated and mutually reinforcing kinds of assistance from both stakeholders, including teachers and parents. Lastly, little is known about the kinds of expectations that teachers have for parental involvement. Thus, this study will provide new insights into the existing body of knowledge relating to teachers' expectations of parental involvement.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

The primary aim of this study was to explore teachers' expectations of parental involvement in learners' education.

##### **1.4.1 Objectives of the study**

In exploring the problem, the objectives of the study were as follows:

- To determine teachers' perceptions of the ideal type of parental involvement in children's education.
- To explore what teachers expect parents to do in their process of involvement in children's education.

- To establish how teachers communicate their expectations to parents regarding parental involvement in children's education.

### **1.4.2 Research questions**

To address the broader aim of the study on the teachers' expectations in respect of parental involvement, the researcher sought answers to the following questions:

- What are the teachers' perceptions of the ideal type of parental involvement in children's education?
- What do teachers expect parents to do in their process of involvement in their children's education?
- How do teachers communicate their expectations to parents regarding parental involvement in children's education?

### **1.5 Outline of the study**

This study on teacher expectations of parental involvement in learner education: Perceptions of primary school teachers, in Mpumalanga province consists of six chapters as outlined below.

#### **Chapter 1: Background to the study**

This chapter contains an introduction and background to the study. The problem statement and significance of the study were outlined in this chapter. The chapter also provided the aim; objectives as well as the research questions that guided the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

A review of literature is provided in this chapter. The existing research on teachers' expectations of parental involvement is discussed in this chapter. The chapter also provides detailed information on the theoretical framework underpinning this study, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. According to this theory, children function within four interconnected systems including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Chapter 3 contains the research methodology. It includes descriptions of the research approach, paradigm as well as the design underpinning this study. The sampling procedures used to select the schools and participating teachers for interviewing are discussed under this chapter. The chapter also discusses how data collected from the participants was analysed. Lastly, ethical considerations as well as the model for ensuring trustworthiness are outlined in this chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings**

This chapter provides a detailed presentation of the findings before key discussion points are presented in chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings**

The presentation and analysis of the findings presented in chapter 4 is discussed in relation to literature in chapter 5.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations**

A summary of the research study is provided in chapter 6. In addition, this chapter presents conclusions and leads to related recommendations concerning the strengthening of parental involvement in children's education in the selected schools.

### **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the background to the study, the problem statement and the significance of the study. The aim, the objectives as well as the research questions guided the study were also outlined in chapter 1. The next chapter, chapter 2 discusses the literature reviewed regarding teachers' perceptions on parental involvement, and their expectations thereof. The theoretical framework underpinning the study will also be discussed in chapter 2. In the following chapter, the researcher looks into what other established studies have said about the topic which is being studied.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study are discussed. There is subsequent evidence to suggest that when schools collaborate with families to support learning, children are inclined to succeed not just in school but also through the other aspects of their lives. Research conducted by Hanafin and Lynch (2002) has shown that parental participation in children's education improves learners' learning experiences and academic performance. According to these researchers, participation by parents and family members is critical not only in the beginning of the educational process, but also throughout children's entire academic careers. With the above evidence, it is therefore important to review the various debates on the concept of parental involvement both locally and internationally.

### **2.2 The concept of parental involvement**

When several definitions of parental involvement are considered, it becomes clear that parental involvement has been proved to effectively contribute to children's school outcomes and well-being. These definitions of parental involvement vary, and include a broad array of actions such as volunteering at school, monitoring learners' progress, helping learners with homework, making education-related decisions, and communicating with the school personnel. Research also indicated that teachers and parents differ in terms of their perceptions of the prevalence of

parental involvement and these differences stem from the fact that researchers have differing definitions of what constitutes parental involvement (Thornton, 2015).

According to Bakker and Denessen (2007), definitions of parental involvement can be divided into two major categories. In view of this, some of the definitions tend to focus more on home-based involvement and some on school-based involvement. Illustrative examples of school-based involvement activities as stressed by Bakker and Denessen (2007) include serving in committees, contacting the learner's teacher, helping in the classroom and volunteering to help in field trips. The scope of home-based parental involvement activities, on the other hand, differs between studies. For instance, a study conducted by Bicknell (2014) focused on parents' activities to reinforce children's cognitive development such as helping with homework, visits to a library and reading with the child, whereas other studies such as Coutts, Sheridan, Kwon and Semke's (2012) referred to more general parenting activities such as monitoring children's activities varying from the limit of television watching time, following a specific set of rules to discipline the child, being home when the child returns from school and selection of friends. According to these authors, the above-mentioned activities do not only reduce the actual behaviour issues but also aimed at creating a better overall family-school partnership.

Previous studies have also supported these kinds of parents' activities in learner's education. Fantuzzo, Davis, and Ginsberg (1995) suggested that these behaviours should be incorporated in the conceptualisation of the construct of parental involvement as these parental behaviours are believed to be associated with highly involved parents. These authors also believe that parental involvement should involve the above mentioned behaviours because they directly or indirectly influence children's cognitive development and academic achievement.

Lareau (2000) attempted to define parental involvement as a process of preparing children for school. For Lareau (2000), this process includes such activities as talking and reading to children in order to promote their language development, teaching them the alphabet and fulfilling any requests teachers make of parents such as playing words game with their children at home. Bower and Griffin (2011) also supported this notion and hinted that parental involvement refers to behaviours of parents related to children's education that can be observed as manifestations of their commitment to their children's education affairs. For Bower and Griffin (2011) this suggested that a parent who shows these behaviours to a larger extent can be regarded as highly involved than a parent who shows these behaviours to a lesser degree.

### **2.3 Parental involvement and learner performance**

There is considerable evidence to suggest that parents' involvement in the education of their children can make a significant difference in the educational attainment of these children (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). It has been noted by Sheng (2012) that parents' involvement in the early phase of their children's education development can have a significant impact on the child's cognitive and literacy abilities. In addition, other researchers such as Lee and Bowen (2006), and Studsrod and Bru (2009) have measured the effect of close parental relationships and support on children's educational attainment. These researchers have found that such children usually achieve very high scores in the area of psycho-social and behavioural competence.

Research conducted by Laftman (2008) has also shown that early parental involvement as well as continuous involvement has a significant positive effect on children's school achievement. On another note, literature suggested that most parents consider being involved in their children's

education as they believe to be in a better position to put their children on the right path. These parents are perceived to be the major players in the lives of their children and hence understand their children's needs best (Olatayo & Ogunkola, 2008; Sylvia, Scott, Totsika, Erelly-Stevens, & Crook, 2008; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). This supports the idea that parents can change their children's educational routes when they engage with their children's schooling (Domina, 2005). It therefore, follows that schools in which parents are actively involved, are better positioned to tackle problems associated with their children's education, argued Okeke (2014).

## **2.4 Types of parental involvement**

Epstein (1995) discovered a framework for defining six different types of parental involvement. For Epstein (1995), this framework assists teachers in managing school and family partnership programs. The assumption of Epstein's model of parental involvement is that the more parents are involved in their children's education, the higher the level of academic achievement learners can attain. The six types of parental involvement developed by Epstein (1995) were defined based on the relationships between the family, school, and community in which a variety of practices exist, leading to a variety of distinct outcomes for learners, parents as well as teachers (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's framework of six types of parental involvement includes the following:

**Parenting-** It is necessary that the schools assist all families of their learners to establish home environment conducive to learning.

**Communication-** This can be achieved through designing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's overall performance and progress.

**Volunteering-** This is achieved through creating various ways in which families can become involved in school activities.

**Learning at home-** It is important that the schools provide information and ideas to families about how parents can help learners at home with schoolwork and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.

**Decision making-** It is essential for schools to include parents in school decision-making, school leadership and representatives.

**Collaborating with community-** This can be achieved through identifying and integrating resources and services from the community that can strengthen school programs, family practices, and children's learning and development.

Epstein's (1995) expansively discussed various social factors which might influence the academic performance of children courtesy of parental involvement. She stated in her framework of six types of parental involvement in children's education that these six types have major role in the betterment of the academic performance of learners. According to Epstein (1995), supportive learning activities performed at home that reinforce school curricula can enhance learners' academic performance. The effectiveness of Epstein's types of parental involvement has been substantiated by recent research conducted by Rafiq, Fatima, Sohail, Saleem and Khan (2013). These scholars posited that parents are truly the first teachers of their children because they have been thought of as partners in the educational process of their children. Examples

given to this role included parents helping children with homework, supportive in school activities, and working in partnership with teachers to improve children's learning experiences.

Other researchers such as Lawson (2003) also highlighted types of parental involvement. Lawson (2003) differentiated between two types of parental involvement, namely home-based parental involvement and school-based parental involvement as discussed below:

*Home-based* parental involvement involves home-based activities that support the school's mission and teachers' work practices through positive parental social modelling. Participants (teachers) in Lawson's (2003) study viewed parental involvement as a means of facilitating their ability to teach. According to these teachers, home-based parental involvement is regarded as a vital vehicle to make teachers' jobs easier. These teachers viewed parents as the first-time teachers and teachers at school just pick up a ball later after the first five years or so of the children's lives.

*School-based* parental involvement denotes volunteering to participate at the school itself. Participants (teachers) in Lawson's (2003) study posited that parental involvement could be practiced in the library, school halls, at the canteens, or even on the playgrounds. Some teachers in this study argued that school-based parental involvement can be directed to generate effective and powerful classroom aides and allies. According to these teachers, school-based parental involvement is aimed at facilitating and enhancing learners' school experiences, as it would assist learners to succeed by adhering to the needs of the school and their teachers.

According to Lawson (2003), teachers hold a belief that learners' valuation of education is directly associated with the values and expectations of their parents and therefore they perceive home-based parental involvement as the primary means of emphasising the importance of

education. This is because learners acquire most of their values and belief systems from their parents. Thus, if parents believe that school is important, then learners are more likely to carry through the same belief.

## **2.5 Parental involvement intercontinentally**

Parental involvement has been noted across continents. It has been recognised globally that parents are important and necessary stakeholders in the education of their children. For this reason, this study looked at different continents, including, Europe, Asia and Africa to outline how parental involvement is dealt with in these continents. Parental involvement in South Africa was also outlined so as to compare it with other areas of the world. Macbeth (1998) argued that many countries around the world have placed legal responsibility for the education of the individual child on parents, by providing the prescription of their rights and duties as parents. Macbeth (1998) further stated that the school is no longer considered to be the only system that can provide the whole of children's education. Parents are now believed to be an integral part of their children's education process, and a school can only realistically seek educational objectives in partnership with these parents.

The above has resulted in a variety of models being suggested that link the home and the school, based on the concept of education that is thought to incorporate home learning, school learning and community learning. One of the models explaining the family-school interaction is that which draws a distinction between the family-social sphere and the scholastic sphere of education. Each has natural factors (the human relation) and technical factors (formal teaching and learning). Macbeth (1998) posited that this model asserts that each sphere has aspects which

are exclusive to parents and teachers respectively. Thus, teaching and learning are thought to be activities that happen both at home and at school.

The concept of parental involvement has received attention in European countries. The family-school partnership was established by the European Association of parents, teachers and pupils. One example to this is one that highlighted by Huntsinger and Jose (2009) when they confirmed the declaration signed in Copenhagen on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1996 by the European Parents Association and the European Syndicate Committee of Education which emphasised that collaboration between parents, teachers and administrative staff is a factor in developing good quality education and training. Another confirmation of the value of parental involvement came from the “Parents and Partners” conference organised under the British Presidency of the European Union (EU) in Edinburgh on the 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1998. This included presentation of various strategies and methods developed to encourage the participation of parents, and to make the most of their contribution to raising school standards. The role of parents in the education system of the EU published by the Eurydice Network indicated that parents throughout Europe find themselves increasingly involved in the management of their children’s education, at an advisory or sometimes even decision-making level.

According to DePlanty, Coulter-Kern and Kim (2007) all European countries have developed policies in favour of the involvement of parents within education systems. These authors argued that this is mainly illustrated by the creation of different representative bodies at school level with parents being included as part of these bodies. They asserted that councils with parents’ participation at central, region or local level are mainly of an advisory nature. This participation allows parents’ representatives to have the right to be informed and give their opinion. Delhaxe (1998) confirmed that the kinds of decisions taken by most participatory bodies in schools

throughout Europe refer to matters of internal and day-to-day management such as expenditure or maintaining good parent-teacher relations. However, Delhaxe (1998) expressed that for some other types of decision-making matters such as those linked to the allocation of the school's budget, the number of teachers to be employed and their recruitment as well as establishment of the curriculum and teaching methods, parents' participation is relatively lower. Delhaxe (1998) said that only half of the European countries have entrusted those decisions, at least in part, to school councils with parent representation.

Other empirical studies done in Europe have shown that participation of parents in educational procedures improves the learners' achievement. The notion above was maintained previously by early studies on the effects of parents' involvement in early childhood. Henderson (1981) found that children's own willingness to participate in school activities increased as they saw their parents engaging in school activities. Morrison (1988) argued that children understand in this way that their parents are appreciative of and value their school and education. The claim above indicates that mutual understanding and collaboration between parents and teachers on educational matter can yield positive results. In Contrast, Frederikou and Folerou-Tserouli (1991) found that teachers welcome cooperation with parents, but sometime parents are indifferent or want to intervene in teachers' duties and roles.

For Morrison (1978), it must be pointed out that the success of parental involvement in education depends to a great extent on how well the school organises their participation. In addition, recent studies on parental involvement also determined to what degree parental involvement can affect learners' achievement. For example, Karibayeva and Bogar (2014) investigated the effect of parental involvement on learners' educational attainment. They found that learners whose parents are highly interested in their education tend to have better academic results as compared

to their peers whose parents are not interested at all. Thus, parental involvement can be seen as a factor that can affect learners' academic success either positively or negatively, depending on how well parents decide to get involved.

Like in other countries, ideas about the role of parents in children's education and learning differ amongst Europeans. For instance, European-American parents are less involved in children's learning as these parents spend less time with children on learning-related activities (Ng, Pomerantz, & Lam, 2007). Chao (1996) postulated that European-American parents see cultivating a sense of autonomy in children as critical to children's learning. According to Cheung and Pomerantz (2011), this emphasis on the role of autonomy in learning influences parents to accompany their involvement with dampened control and heightened autonomy support. These authors said that American parents often do not insist on checking over children's homework, thus allowing children to decide whether they want parents to be involved in such a manner or not. The latter is of importance given that this autonomy support is predictive of decrement in children's academic and emotional adjustment. This means that the different cultural ideologies about learning and parents' role are likely to lead to differences among the Europeans in the quality and quantity of parental involvement in education.

In addition, the theories of parental involvement in children's education have grown in importance in Asian countries as well. Contrary to European-American parents, children's learning is a major parents' responsibility in China. This is reflected in the Chinese notion of "Guan" which Chao (1994) has argued is key to Chinese parenting. According to Chao (1994), "Guan" entails meaning of "love and to govern" such that children do not fall short of standards, particularly those in the academic arena. Given this notion of Guan, along with the important of learning as a moral endeavour in China, many Chinese parents accompany their involvement in

children's learning with heightened control. Parents' heightened monitoring of children's activities is central to the concept of Guan, with such monitoring viewed as an act of love (Chao, 1994). Consistent with this finding, Zou, Anderson, Sorin, and Hajhashemi (2013) found that Chinese parents are highly committed to their children's learning with most of them not only supervising home-learning for more than 30 minutes a day but also communicate school issues to their children quite frequently. Besides being highly involved in supervising their children's school work, parents in Zou et al. (2013) study were found to be actively engaged in their children's extra-curricular activities as well (Zou et al., 2013).

In the context of India, Sreekanth (2010) argued that few studies have been conducted on parental involvement especially on the minority groups. Sreekanth (2010) cited parents' educational level as the huge constraint on parental involvement in children's education. Consistent with research conducted in other areas of the world, his study proved that parents tend to have greater involvement in their children's education when they have a higher level of education. In addition, Vellymalay (2011) recognised the interest in examining the relationship between parents' educational level and their involvement in their children's education. According to Vellymalay (2011), parents with lower or no educational status lack parental skills and thus have little or no ability to assist their children academically. Early studies on parental involvement have also shown the impact that parents' educational background has on learners' education. For instance, Baker and Stevenson (1986) supported the idea that a child from uneducated family can be expected to experience lower parental involvement in his or her education. These researchers have referred to many ways in which educated parents in India become involved in their children's education. They found that well-educated mothers have more knowledge of their children's education and are often in contact with their children's

school. Baker and Stevenson (1986) added that these parents have a greater awareness of their children's education and achievement because they monitor their educational progress.

Similar to China, parental involvement in Japan is considered to be strong. However, unlike China where parents involuntarily take charge in their children's learning, teachers in Japanese schools are believed to make explicit and exacting demands on parents (Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki & Mindnich, 2008). Jabar (2010) concurred that Japanese schools foster interdependence between schools/teachers and families/parents through the six different ways in which teachers relate with parents. These ways include the following as outlined by Jabar (2010):

Firstly, schools in Japan provide venues where parents serve as *audience*. This includes the yearly activity where parents of incoming first graders are required to attend the school orientation that usually takes place at the beginning of the year whereby parents are provided with information about school norms and policies. Secondly, Japanese schools also provide opportunities for parents to participate as *volunteers*. Here, parents are asked to fill up volunteer forms indicating their expertise, experiences and interests, and this information is recorded and the school refers to it when the service of some parents is needed. Thirdly, in Japan parents are encouraged to act as *paraprofessionals* in schools. In this way, parents take turns in safeguarding school children as they cross the streets to and from the school. Fourthly, parents in Japan are expected to act as *teachers* of their own children especially during school holidays by helping them accomplish their school work. To ensure that parents monitor their children school activities during the break effectively, most schools in Japan expect parents and their children to indicate their daily plans for the entire break whereby parents are expected to impose such plans upon their children while away from school. These parents also play a role as *learners* themselves. The schools provide parents with seminars to improve their own efficacy in

educating and rearing their children. Other skills training include the use of cellphones and the internet with the hope to improve parents' knowledge on how such technologies can impact on their children's learning. Lastly, parents are also encouraged to be *decision-makers*. They are encouraged to make decisions about matters which are of interest to school children.

The above activities proved that Japanese schools present various ways that can be used to provide parents with opportunities for involvement in their children's education.

Parental involvement in learners' education has also been studied in Africa. Most countries in Africa have developed various strategies that are aimed at promoting the involvement of parents in children's education. Like in some African countries such as South Africa, Burundi and Uganda, parental involvement in Kenya has now come to be recognised as a key process in children's learning (Echaune, Ndika, & Sang, 2015). According to these authors, successive governments in Kenya have all along recognised the need to improve learning environments by involving parents. Consequently, the Basic Education Act of Kenya (2013) was enacted requiring the school Boards of Management to assess school needs with full participation of parents. However, Echaune et al. (2015) argued that the impact of parental involvement in Kenya continues to be a significant issue. They asserted that many schools in this country report poor results due to claims that parents are unsupportive even after the government of Kenya introduced free and compulsory primary education in 2003. Although the introduction of free and compulsory education resulted in limited resources that later posed challenges to both internal and external efficiency, the education system in Kenya was rearranged as it was established that primary education could contribute effectively to human capital development and nation building (Republic of Kenya, 2011). Consistent with Echaune et al.'s (2015) findings, Kibert (2010) investigated the role of parents in enhancing preschool children's education in

Kenya, Uasin Gitshu district. Kibert (2010) found that parental involvement in education was low. Spens (2011) also indicated no shared responsibility between parents and schools in Kenyan rural primary schools and that schools were solely responsible for learners' education and there was hardly any relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic performance. It should be noted that these studies were limited in design and sample to allow generalisation to the entire population.

A study conducted by Chowa, Ansong & Osei-Akoto (2012) on parental involvement in Ghana yielded similar results that majority of parents, about 83%, hardly assisted children with their school work. Evidence suggested that general parental involvement is important for children's academic performance in Ghana (Nyarko, 2011). Unlike the Kenyan government which provides free education for primary school level, Ghana has made educational funding a high priority and has surpassed most other African countries in education spending (Adesina, 2009). Given this additional cost, Adesina (2009) revealed that some Ghanaian parents question the value and benefit of school for their children, which in turn may influence parents' level of involvement in their children's education. Similarly, Nyarko (2011) concurred that parental involvement in schools is often lacking and this has been identified as a primary barrier to the further improvement of schools in Ghana. On another level, Nyarko (2011) has recognised instances where parents in Ghana partake in their children's education. However, Nyarko (2011) argued that Ghanaian parents' engagement in education has been limited to school-related activities at home such as ensuring that their children complete their home-work. Other authors disagreed with Nyarko (2011) and revealed that the nature of parental involvement in Ghana is changing as more parents are interacting with schools by attending school meetings and recreational events (Chowa et al., 2012).

Not all countries in Africa reported poor parental involvement in education. Erlendsdottir (2010) conducted a study in Namibia on the extent of parental involvement in learners' academic performance. The study revealed that parents reported very high levels of involvement in their children's education. According to Erlendsdottir's (2010) study, these parents recognised the importance of education for their children's future. Similar to Japan schools' notion of parental involvement, it was said that the Namibian government launched an initiative known as the Family Literacy Programme whereby parents of grade one children attend so as to provide them with an understanding of what is happening at their children's schools (Namibia, Ministry of Education, 2006). This was implemented so that parents can be encouraged to interact with teachers and respond to their children's progress.

Furthermore, the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) of 2006 was developed in Namibia, and stressed that education should start at home (ETSIP, 2006). Like in Kenya, Namibian education has been made free and compulsory at the primary level to allow parents with low socio-economic status to feel in charge of their children's education. This suggests that Namibia government has made efforts to enhance parental involvement in children's education. Despite that schools in Namibia involve parents and families in children's education, some areas of Namibia typically in the Rundu Circuit do report unsatisfactory parental involvement and participation in school activities (Namibia Ministry of Education, 2010). It was discovered that in most cases in these particular areas of Namibia, parents do not attend meetings at school. On this notion, it is clear that parental involvement in some areas of Namibia is still lacking.

Although the studies reviewed above have suggested that parental involvement is important for learners' academic performance, evidence has shown that there still exists a high level of

parental non-involvement in schools across the world, particularly in the underprivileged schools in Africa. While poor parental involvement in learners' education is apparent in most African countries, studies above highlighted less involvement of European parents in education as well. However, this poor involvement is associated to parents' need to cultivate a sense of autonomy in their children's learning. Contrary to this view, parents in Asian countries such as China view children's learning as a primary responsibility for parents as indicated in their efforts to monitor their children's academic progress. Thus, the different cultural ideologies about learning and parents' role are likely to result in differences among countries in the quality of parental involvement in education. However, they all share a common sentiment that the involvement of parents in learners' education is crucial, whether privileged or underprivileged.

## **2.6 Parental involvement in South Africa**

After the discussion of the different perspectives on parental involvement in other countries, the review of literature on parental involvement in the South African context is necessary. Parental involvement in South Africa is of interest amongst researchers and policy makers as they have started to consider factors outside school that may contribute towards the improvement of education system. This includes that support provided by parents and other family members is believed to play a vital role in children's education.

Research has shown that by law all schools in South Africa are expected to work with families as a way of trying to improve the level of education. This is to say that parental involvement in learners' education has assumed a new form in South Africa as a result of the changes in

education system brought to the fore by the SASA of 1996 (SASA 84 of 1996). The underpinning philosophy of the SASA of 1996 is that there should be efforts to involve parents in education when schools strive to improve the quality of education and learners' performance. This proved that the success of learners depends largely on parents' participation in education. According to Motala and Deacon (2011), the involvement of parents in education is not only perceived to be instrumental to enhance learners' academic achievement but also has the potential to improve parents' sense of empowerment, thereby supporting the greater achievement of valued educational outcomes.

Prior to 1994, South Africa was influenced by fragmented and racial educational system which particularly impacted negatively on rural black communities (Matshe, 2014). According to Matshe (2014), what many rural schools in South Africa are experiencing today is the direct result of the impact of the apartheid educational system, and it is hard to overcome. Msila (2012) concurred that the apartheid government failed to address the importance of parental involvement in education especially in the disadvantaged communities. He claimed that this has resulted in an absence of participation in education by important stakeholders such as parents and the community. Nevertheless, literature has shown that much has been done by the government since the end of apartheid education, and policies have been put in place to address inequalities in education to ensure that education becomes a vehicle of democracy in the country. Parental involvement policy was also revised when the Hunter Report of 1995 was released. The Hunter Report (1995) suggested that parents have both the right and responsibility to participate in their children's education by assuming an active role in determining and adopting policies in schools. In accordance with the Hunter Report, the White Paper was also released in 1996 which acknowledged that parents have the right to be involved in school governance. With all these

new arrangements, it is therefore accepted to suggest that the success of these policies depends solely on the schools' efforts to implement them.

Congruent with the findings in other parts of Africa, parental involvement in South Africa, particularly in rural areas has not been pleasing. For instance, Matshe (2014) argued that education in South African schools has not yet been stabilised even after more than 20 years of democracy because family involvement in education is not prioritised, referring to the rural and public schools. For Matshe (2014), the quality of public education is compromised by the way the stakeholders handle educational issues in these schools. Although it has been the intention of the government at large to promote parental involvement in the South African schools, it has been discovered that parents in rural communities of South Africa have not been performing as according to the expectations of the SASA 84 of 1996 for the advancement of quality public education (RSA, 1996). Unlike parents in urban schools who are used to a powerful participation in managing their children's schools, Heystek (1999) argued that parents in rural and disadvantaged schools in South Africa have little or no experience in managing or participating in the schools where their children attend. This is likely to be true as Mavhiva (1996) posited that parents in disadvantaged schools do not see the school and the education of their children as their responsibility. However, Heystek (1999) does not blame these parents for their poor involvement; instead revealed that most rural schools do not have adequate structures put in place to encourage parental participation. Given this, it is reasonable to conclude that parents in rural schools tend to be absent in their children's learning as most of these schools show no efforts to enforce parents' participation in learners' education.

Singh, Mbokazi, and Msila (2004) alluded that parental involvement in learners' education in South Africa is faced with challenges, referring to many factors with socio-economic status

(SES) of parents being prominent. Singh et al. (2004) found that family's low SES has a negative impact on the learners' performance. It should be noted that not all researchers viewed low SES as a hindrance to learner's academic achievement. For instance, Fagbeminiyi (2011) found that some learners do manage to perform well in school despite being faced with challenges associated with low SES in their homes. McGrath and Kuriloff (1999) reminded school administrators and policy makers to be not indifferent to the effects of parents' SES on parental involvement in education. These scholars argued that efforts to involve parents in education can be biased at times as it provides further advantage to wealthier parents while creating hindrances to the involvement of disadvantaged parents. Jafarov (2015) argued that such an imbalance in parental participation in education is demonstrated in historically disadvantaged schools where most of the parents were believed to be lacking the required literacy levels for participation. In addition, Jafarov (2015) claimed that most of these parents are unemployed, thereby reducing their role in negotiating from a point of strength. In light of the above, there is a necessity to take into cognisance the family's SES in the process of parental involvement in education, particularly in South Africa.

## **2.7 Barriers to effective parental involvement in learner's education**

Although Hornby and Lafaele (2011) indicated that parental involvement in education has been regarded as an essential element of effective education, and that it is advantageous to children of all ages, there are however clear gaps between the rhetoric on parental involvement in the literature and the typical parental involvement practices found in schools. Christenson and Sheridan (2001) also found in their study that there is still more rhetoric than reality about

families and schools working together as genuine partners. Henderson and Berla (1994) summarised this situation succinctly when they stated that parental involvement is not in widespread practice despite its benefits. For Hornby and Lafaele (2011), there are many reasons to suggest the gap between what is said and what is done in the name of parental involvement, and these can be conceptualised as barriers to parental involvement. It is for these reasons that this section of the study seeks to outline the factors that are believed to hinder the process of parental involvement in learners' education. Literature related to parental involvement in education has shown that barriers to effective parental involvement can be divided into three categories including parent-related factors, school-related factors, and learner-related factors. These factors are discussed in detail below.

- **Parent-related factors**

Studies have shown that parental involvement can be affected by several parent-related factors such as parents' beliefs about parental involvement, parents' level of education and parents' current life context. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) posited that there are parents' beliefs regarding various issues associated with parental involvement in education. In their study, they argued that the manner in which parents view their role in their children's education is vital. They found that parents who believe that their role is only limited to getting children to school, and then allow the teachers to take over the full responsibility for their children's education, are less likely to be actively involved in the education of their children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) findings also suggested that parents with a minimal belief in their ability to assist their children are less likely to make considerable efforts to engage with the schools because of their view that

such commitments will not add value into their children's education. Other work has supported these findings. Berthelsen and Walker (2008) argued that while some parents hold a notion that the responsibilities for children's learning are shared between parents and schools, other parents do not believe that they should take an active role, which in turn impact negatively on their willingness to take charge in their children's education. For these parents, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) said that teachers must encourage them to develop personal self-efficacy beliefs that they can be effective in supporting their children's education.

Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007) viewed parents' level of education as a barrier to parental involvement as it actively influences their views on whether they have sufficient skills and knowledge to engage in different aspects of parental involvement in education. As argued by Green et al. (2007), parents for example may feel in some ways inferior to teachers, believing that teachers are better qualified than them, and therefore become reluctant to work closely with teachers. Eccles & Harold (1993) maintained that parents with low educational level tend to have low confidence in their ability to help their children academically. According to Eccles and Harold (1993) such lack of confidence may result from parents taking the view that they have not developed sufficient academic competences to can effectively assist their children with their school work. Such beliefs act as barriers to parental involvement despite widespread acknowledgement that the ability to support children's learning does not require a high level of education from parents (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Therefore, parents with low levels of education may be reluctant to help their children with schoolwork because they hold a view that their knowledge to do so is limited.

Numerous aspects of parents' life contexts were found to act as barriers to parental involvement. Catsambis (2001) stated that family circumstances can be major barriers to parental involvement

where single parents and young or large families, for example, may find it more challenging to get involved in learners' education because of the other responsibilities they have. Astone and McLanahan (1991) found that learners with step parents or single parent in particular receive less support and control in comparison to learners who live in two-parent families. According to Jafarov (2015), parental involvement can be reduced due to marital disruption in the family as parents spend less time with children. Jafarov (2015) argued that this change is particularly true for fathers as the number of children living with their mothers after divorce is significantly higher. Furthermore, Bauer and Barnett (2001) argued that parents' employment status can be a barrier too. According to these researchers, when both parents work, there will be less time available for both school-based and home-based parental involvement. Catsambis (2001) expressed that some jobs do allow flexibility for parents to take charge in their children's education; however some parents may be too tired at the end of the day to help children with school work. Although Shaver and Walls (1998) did not view parents' income level as a contributing factor to their level of involvement in learners' education, other researchers discovered that when parents are unemployed, money could be an issue too. Fagbeminiyi (2011) found that high-income parents participate more often in the school activities than low-income parents since these parents are not able to afford transport to school or pay babysitters in order to get to school meetings.

- **School-related factors**

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) have found that parents' perceptions of invitations from schools are considered crucial in developing effective parental involvement since parents think that their involvement should be valued by teachers. Along the same lines, Epstein (2001) noticed that parents are more likely to be involved when teachers actively encourage parental involvement. To add to this, Mapp (2002) also discovered that parents are more encouraged to become involved in their children's education if teachers have positive and facilitating attitudes towards involving parents. Thus, it should be expected that when parents perceive teachers as not being open to involving parents this can act as a major barrier to parental involvement. As such, Eccles and Harold (1993) concluded that schools which are welcoming to parents, and make it clear that they value parental involvement, develop more effective parental involvement than schools that do not appear inviting to parents.

Another factor that has an influence on parental involvement is language. According to LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011), the language that schools use can be very academic to the extent that most teachers fail to communicate with parents in a different language background that they can understand. Aronson (1996) expressed that some parents may lack confidence in helping their children because the language of instruction at school is not their first language, and as a result they may not feel confident enough in their ability to assist learners and to communicate effectively with teachers. For other parents, as discussed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), lack of confidence may stem from them having had negative experiences with their children's schools or through them experiencing either behavioural or learning difficulties during their years of schooling. Lastly, Fields-Smith (2005) stated that teacher's requests made on parents have a noticeable effect on parents deciding to get involved. This

researcher was of the opinion that sometimes teachers' expectations on parents' roles in learners' education are unclear. For Fields-Smith (2005), parents are more likely to respond more frequently when the teachers' demands are well defined. Therefore, to enhance parental involvement, it is crucial that the schools communicate clearly their expectations from parents.

- **Learner-related factors**

As it is widely believed that parental involvement decreases when children grow older, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) recognised the age of children as a barrier to the involvement of parents. They argued that as opposed to older children, younger children are more positive about their parents being involved in their school work. Older children, on the other hand, are less keen about parental involvement in their education as adolescents strive to become independent of their parents. Crozier (1999) also identified that most parents attribute their less involvement to their children's need for freedom. Although parents are not directly involved in their adolescents' education due to the claim above, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) realised that adolescents are still considered to desire and benefit from their parents' involvement in other ways such as making subject choices and helping them with homework. In light of the above, parents and sometimes teachers may interpret the situation and assume that older children do not want parents to be involved in their education, which can act as a barrier to effective parental involvement. Moreover, the learner's gender can hinder the process of parental involvement (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000). Deslandes and Potvin (1999) found in their study that male learners' mothers interact with teachers more often than female ones. However, Cooper, Lindsay and Nye

(2000) argued this point that male learners' parents' level of involvement is higher than females' in primary school while in high school is relatively lower.

The other set of beliefs which is crucial to parental involvement include parents' views about children's intelligence as well as how these children learn and develop their abilities. For instance, parents would not see the point in getting involved in their children's education if they believe that children's intelligence is fixed and that their school achievement is due to children being lucky not that they have the ability to do well (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Such parents, according to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), believe that children's innate ability set a limit in these children's school achievement. On the other pole, Eccles and Harold (1996) viewed parents of learners with high achievement as more willing to be part of their children's education than those of learners with low educational attainment. These authors argued that such things as encouraging children to do their school work or attending parent-teacher meetings at school can be viewed as a waste of time for parents with low achieving learners. Thus, such parents are more likely to be negative about parental involvement.

## **2.8 National Development Plan Vision (NDPV) 2030**

The National Development Plan Vision 2030 is central to South Africa's long-term educational development. The notion behind the NDPV 2030 is that by 2030, the schooling system in South Africa should be characterised by parents who are actively involved in their children's schools and also that schools should be accountable to parents. Among other goals, these two factors need to be addressed so that all schools meet the basic parental involvement standards set by the National Department of Basic Education (National Planning Commission, 2011). The NDPV

2030 also emphasised two factors including improving education, training and innovation as well as education and training vision as discussed below.

### **2.8.1 Improving education, training and innovation**

National Planning Commission (NPC) (2011) emphasised that education, training and innovation are central to South Africa's long term development. They are the core elements in alleviating poverty and inequality in the country. The report by the NPC (2011) stressed the links between education, opportunities and employment, with a particular emphasis on the notion of building capacities. It has been shown in the NPC's 2011 report that people define their identity through education to take control of their lives, raise healthy families so as to develop societies and contribute to governance and politics of their communities. Spaul (2013) concurred with this report and argued that quality education is key to the development of the country. Spaul (2013) stated that the quality of education for most black children in South Africa is poor, which in turn denies many pupils access to employment and earning potential. In response to the weak performance of black South African learners, the NPC (2011) proposed that foundation skills in areas such as science, language and mathematics, arts and ethics are pivotal elements of a good education system. Effective learning and life-long work experience improve productivity that enables the cycle that will grow the country's economy (Spaul, 2013).

### **2.8.2 Education and training vision**

According to the NPC (2011) there is a need to ensure that all children benefit from, and have access to high quality education. This is important as Kotze (2015) highlighted that early childhood is an opportune period during which pertinent development has a prospect of cultivating potential within individuals. Van der Berg (2015) argued that it is advantageous to develop the child's brain at the early years because some abilities are produced more effectively when the child is still young than they would during other life periods. Therefore, early investments in education tend to give greater returns to society than investments in later stages of life. In order to maintain this, the NPC's 2011 report indicated that a range of childhood development services and programmes are needed to support the holistic development of young children. These services should be flexible, so that they can respond to the needs of families, children, and communities.

In addition, Hectman, Stixrud and Urzua (2006) expressed that the early period of skill development also means that the lack of development of certain cognitive and non-cognitive functions can have permanent detrimental effects. Consequently, the lack of investments during this critical period can result in the need for remedial help later in life, at which stage it will be less effective and costlier (Hectman et al., 2006). This argument is of utmost importance in South Africa as majority of children are from low-economic backgrounds where parents have very low literacy levels. According to Pretorius (2014), these children from these homes are seldom exposed to regular literacy practices particularly effective in supporting children's development. This lack of regular literacy practices could potentially have lasting detrimental effects on the children's development.

## **2.9 Theoretical framework**

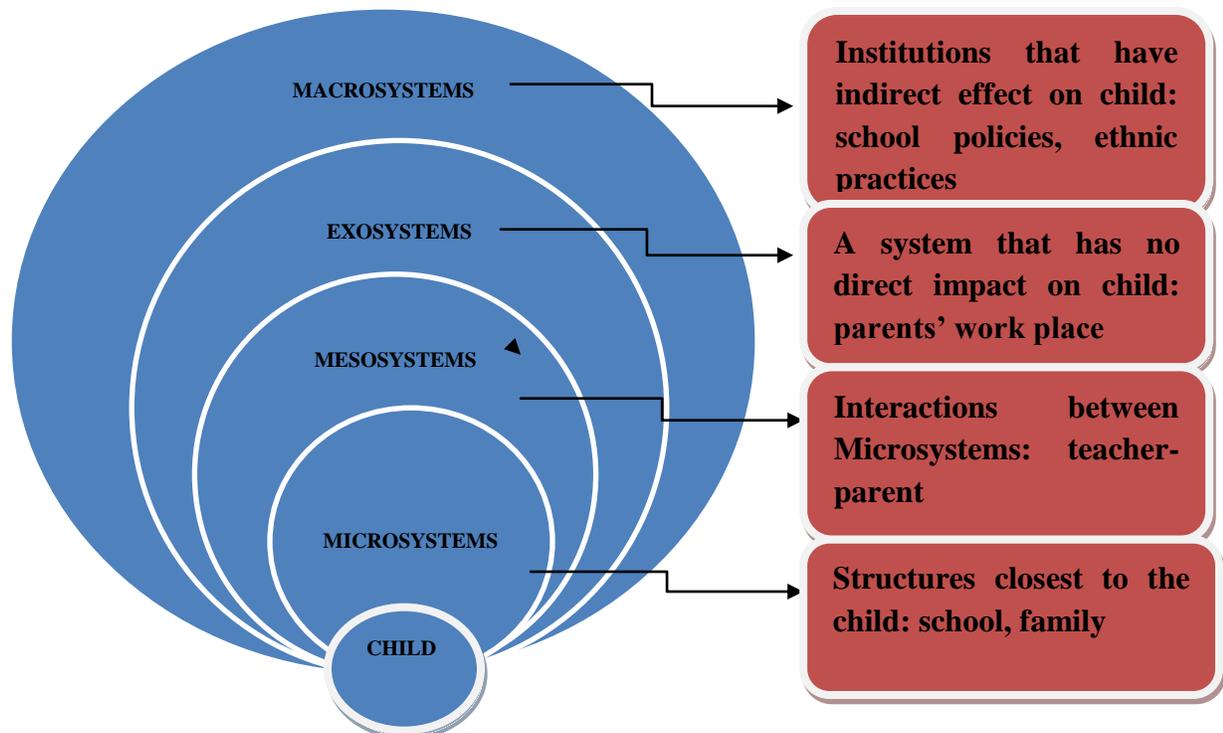
Although Abd-El-Khalick and Akerson (2004) pointed out the difficulty of identifying an exact definition of a theoretical framework, other researchers such as LeCompte and Preissle (1993) defined it as a collection of interrelated concepts that can be used to direct research with the purpose of predicting and explaining the results of the research. In other words, a theoretical framework is used to provide the rationale for conducting the research (Radhakrishna, Yoder, & Ewing, 2007). Literature has shown that a theoretical framework has a number of roles in educational research and these roles improve the quality of research (Caliendo & Kyle, 1996). According to various scholars, a theoretical framework assists the researcher to choose appropriate questions for the study (Miller, 2007); assists the researcher to make predictions of the outcomes and to interpret and analyse the results of the research based on existing literature (Abd-El Khalick & Akerson, 2007); guides the researcher towards appropriate data collection methods (Miller, 2007); guides the choice of research design (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993); connects the researcher to existing literature (Smyth, 2004); convinces the reader of the relevance of the research question (Mishra & Koehler, 2006); and provides assumptions that guide the researcher (Miller, 2007). The following paragraphs will discuss the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

### **2.9.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory**

The theoretical framework for this study draws on the work of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Developed by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, ecological systems theory explains how human development is influenced by different types of

environmental systems as indicated in the diagram below. Said differently, Bronfenbrenner's work on ecological systems theory described the child's ecology in terms of a set of nested levels of the environment. Four interrelated types of environmental systems exist in Bronfenbrenner's 1979 ecological systems theory including the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems. These levels range from the smallest, proximal settings in which individuals directly interact to the larger, distal settings that indirectly influence their development.

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, micro-system includes the setting in which the individual interact such as one's home and school. Moving outward in Bronfenbrenner's ecological levels is the meso-system which according to Bronfenbrenner (1979) involves processes that occur between the multiple microsystems in which individuals are embedded. The key point is that what happens in one micro-system affects what happens in another micro-system. The exo-system is the next outermost level and encompasses the micro-systems in which individuals are involved but not directly embedded such as the parents' workplace. Finally, the outermost level is the macro-system which involves the beliefs, values and norms as reflected in the religious, cultural and socio-economic organisation of the society. Research related to parental involvement on macro-systems provides insight into what predicts parents' participation on education, why some parents in the same activity have different experiences and issues related to fit-in activities (Mahoney & Wiggers 2007).



**Figure 2.1 A graphic representation of the key features in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systemstheory (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)**

Christenson and Sheridan (2001) postulated that, in the ecological model, children function within multiple systems and these systems are interconnected and influence the functioning and behaviour of these children. For instance, a child functions within the micro-systems of their home and their school and the exo-system of their neighbourhood. For one to understand a child's development and behaviour requires understanding of all the systems in a child's life. In addition, Mahoney and Wiggers (2007) posited that the home and the school are prominent micro-systems in a child's life. They interact in the meso-system, the interface between the two micro-systems. This means that events that happen in the child's home affect the child's school, influencing interactions in the meso-system. It can be said without question that the meso-system integrating the home and the school is important because the child travels daily between home and school, experiencing the cultural values, norms, beliefs, and expectations in each micro-

system. Thus, the authors above supported that families and schools influence each other and, together, have a profound impact on child's development.

One aspect of the ecological framework is that it has a particular utility for enhancing parental involvement. Christenson (1995) argued that this model posits a shared responsibility between parents and teachers for children's academic and behavioural success. Bunting, Drew, Lasseigne and Anderson-Butcher (2013) indicated that there is a growing body of literature that suggests that parental engagement and degree of positive connection with the school critically contribute to the improvement of children's learning, healthy development and success in school. This suggested that schools and families need to communicate the beliefs and information they have about each other and their motivation to interface with one another. It should be noted that when the child's micro-systems (school and home) are in conflict, this conflict may disrupt the functioning of the meso-system and therefore negatively affect the child's development (Christenson & Hirsch, 1998). It is for this reason that this study was conducted to outline the expectations of teachers on parental involvement so as to avoid conflict between the child's two important microsystems.

The key conceptual perspective underlying this research was the notion that both parents and teachers have knowledge that is relevant to enhance children's learning. However, this knowledge tends to be not effectively communicated and is often underutilised. The overall aim of this study was to develop, understand and evaluate ways in which the children's learning could be enhanced by means of exchanging knowledge between teachers and parents. It is vital that parents and teachers come together and share their experiences about the learners, since they know learners from different perspectives. Teachers have knowledge about the learners from the formal schooling point of view, while parents know them outside the school. It is important that

the two sets of knowledge about the learners be incorporated so that both parents and teachers know these learners fully.

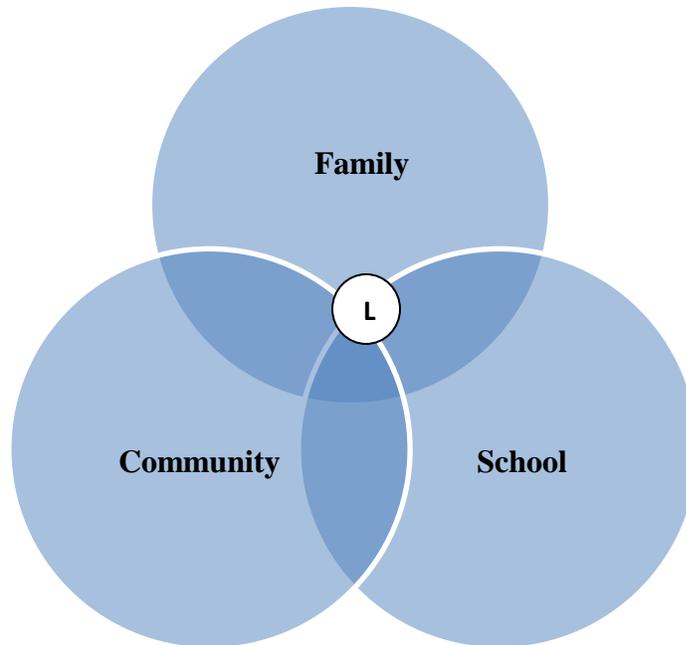
The current study was inspired by the work of Feiler et al. (2008) who posited that although both parents and teachers know much about different aspects of children's learning, these stakeholders' knowledge tends to be less communicated. According to these authors, teachers are trained to know their learners and how they cope at school, while parents have a deep and intimate knowledge about their children including how they approach learning, their weaknesses and strengths. It should be noted that although parents know a great deal about children's interests and skills, they may know little about literacy curriculum and how it is taught in school. Likewise, teachers know much about the curriculum and teaching approaches, they may however not know much about how children conduct themselves out of school. These authors were inspired by the idea that it would be useful for both parents and teachers to incorporate their knowledge about children so that they are both familiar with the learners' overall conduct.

The importance of parents' involvement in their children's schooling began to be acknowledged by many education researchers as they were inspired by the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner's (1979). This recognition inevitably brought with it an interest in identifying ways in which such involvement could be increased. This in turn led to the development of empowerment models in which parents can be actively involved in their children's education. According to Swick and Graves (1993), empowerment models place an emphasis on the importance of recognising the competencies and skills parents have and how these parents can positively contribute to their children's learning. Swick and Graves (1993) argued that these models focus on the importance of viewing parents as valuable partners in the education process. For the purpose of this research, the empowerment models discussed here included Epstein's

overlapping sphere of influence model and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parental involvement. It is important to discuss these models here as they entail practical ways in which parents can work with the schools, thereby strengthening their relationships, which is central to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

### **2.9.2 Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model**

This framework for viewing parental involvement was inspired by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model ( Epstein, 1987; 1992; 2001) and it recognises three main contexts within which a child develops and learns, including the family, the school and the community as indicated in the figure below. According to this model, there are some practices that these contexts conduct in isolation and that there are others that they conduct jointly in order to impact the growth and learning of the child. In order to best meet the needs of the child, Epstein (2001) asserted that partnerships must begin with these three spheres coming together



**Figure 2.2 The overlapping spheres of influence related to parental involvement (Adapted from Epstein, 2001)**

As mentioned above, the school and the family/community comprise the two contexts within which the child develops both academically and socially. Epstein (1987; 1992; 2001) realised that learners' academic performance can be improved when schools and families share goals and work in collaboration to achieve these goals. This model thus emphasised the importance of the social interaction between school staff and parents. According to Epstein (2001), the zone of interaction increases when teachers encourage parental involvement in learner's education as in when parents choose to become more involved. To maximise the interaction, Epstein (2001) posited that strong partnerships should exist between parents and teachers, and these partnerships should be based on mutual respect and open communication. Likewise, when parents and schools fail to work in collaborative with each other, then the spheres are pulled apart and that will negatively affect the development of the learners.

### **2.9.3 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parental involvement**

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model offers a significant extension to Epstein's model as it does not only suggest that parents can be involved in their children's education by engaging with the school, but also attempts to explain how each of the types of involvement can positively influence learner's outcomes. This model of parental involvement, as indicated by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005), suggests that parents' involvement in decisions and choices is based on several constructs drawn from their own ideas and experiences as well as on other constructs growing out of environmental demands and opportunities. These researchers claimed that parents choose to become involved in the education of their children due to their personal construction of their own role in the child's life, their sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school and their perceptions of general demands and opportunities for parental involvement presented both by the child and the child's school. These factors are discussed in detail as indicated below.

- **Role construction**

According to Graves and Wright (2011), role construction refers to parents' beliefs about appropriate actions they should undertake for and with their children. For Hook and Wolfe (2011), many of these roles are defined through social rules and expectations of what makes a good parent and by the social supports provided by parents. Hook and Wolfe (2011) noted that these social rules and expectations vary according to the social and community groups the family belongs to, the nature of the family structure such as single parent or two-parent family as well as according to the life events impacting on parents at any given time such as job redundancy or

divorce. Fan, Williams, and Wolters (2012) argued that in communities that value education, more parents are more likely to be involved. According to these authors, this may vary by socio-economic or cultural grouping, with parents of high social-economic status more likely to partake in their children's education than parents with less socio-economic status.

- **Parents' personal efficacy**

In some instances, parents might value education and perceive that it is appropriate to be involved but choose to distance themselves from participating in the schooling of their children. This might be because they lack a feeling of self-efficacy to can help their children with school work. Dumka, Gonzales, Wheeler and Millsap (2010) expressed that parent's self-efficacy concerns parents' beliefs about their general ability to influence their children's development and educational outcomes, about their specific effectiveness in influencing children's learning, and about their own influence relative to that of peers and children's teacher. Many parents believe that they cannot help or cannot provide the necessary materials such as books needed to assist their children effectively due to financial constraints, parents' low level of education or parents from a cultural and language background different from the school (McInerney, 2014). Conversely, Dumka et al. (2010) asserted that parents who feel they can help their children are more likely to be involved in their children's education as feelings of efficacy are related to a parent's belief that with efforts children can improve and thus it is worthwhile helping them put in the extra effort.

- **Opportunities, invitations and demands for involvement**

In order for parents to become involved, Bernado (2012) realised that parents need to feel that both the children and the school want them to become involved. In other words, Bernado declared that in some instances parents may value education and believe they can help, but feel excluded from the process. According to Frew, Zhou, Duran, Kwok and Benz (2012), it is vital therefore, that schools encourage parents to feel that their involvement is welcome because when parental involvement is required by schools, achievement outcomes of learners are enhanced.

Hattie (2009) attested that despite the complexities of why some parents become involved in their children's education and why some don't, it is well established that effective parental involvement is beneficial for learners, teachers, schools and the parents themselves. McInerney (2012) has found that learners, parents, and teachers rank parents as the primary influence in whether or not learners achieve at school. Therefore, strategies at the school level to maximise the involvement of parents are key (McInerney, 2012).

The examination of the model discussed above has contributed greatly to a new understanding of partnerships between parents and teachers. The relevance of Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model to the concept of partnership is seen through its organisational level as it allows for a holistic analysis of the significant role played by the actors involved in childhood education throughout the life cycle. The parental model of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler expands upon Epstein's model and allows for better understanding of the reasons for a parent's choice to participate or not in school-related activities. Although Epstein's model is based upon the results of psychological studies (Bronfenbrenner's ecological model), it fails to describe the effects of family and individual psychological characteristics on the school-family partnership that lead a

parent to make the decision to become involved in his or her child's education (Deslandes, 2001). Thus, parents may not participate when they do not understand that collaboration is part of their role. To sum up, these models described here complement each other to the extent they lead to strategies for improving the efficacy of all the actors involved, thereby creating successful school-family partnerships.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the literature review and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Literature related to the study was reviewed by looking at various definitions of the concept of parental involvement, the relationship between parental involvement and learner's performance, the types of parental involvement that are believed to be effective in enhancing school-home partnerships. The researcher did not only look at parental involvement in South Africa but also in different contexts including Europe, Asia and Africa. Factors that are believed to be barriers to effective parental involvement were also discussed in this chapter. The research outlined the National Development Plan Vision 2030 on South African education system. The chapter concluded by highlighting the theoretical framework used in the study. In the next chapter, chapter 3, the research methodology guided the study will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology and research design employed to explore the expectations and perceptions that teachers have in respect of parental involvement. According to Kothari (2004), research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. Kothari (2004) further stated that research methodology can be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically as it assists the researcher to describe the various steps that he or she generally adopts in studying the research problem. Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013) concurred that research methodology is the study of methods by which knowledge is gained. This chapter starts with a detailed account of the choices made by the researcher in relation to the suitable research approach, research paradigm, and methods employed for data collection.

### **3.2 Research approach**

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), qualitative research approach refers to an enquiry in which researchers collect data in face to face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings. They further argued that this approach describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, thoughts, and perceptions. In addition, Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) postulated that qualitative approach seeks to understand human and social behaviour from the insider's

perspective, that is, as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting such as a community or a school.

A qualitative approach was deemed relevant as the study explored teachers' expectations and perceptions of parental involvement which cannot be quantified. Unlike quantitative research methods which use numeric data to answer questions, qualitative research methods use words to answer questions; hence qualitative approach was useful for this study. In addition, Johnson and Christensen (2010) stated that qualitative research approach is used to gain an understanding of people's perceptions as they experience them on a certain phenomenon. Furthermore, this study sought to elicit participants' perceptions and perspectives of parental involvement. For this reason, a qualitative research approach was thus suitable for this study.

Qualitative research approach was also chosen for this study due to its characteristics as outlined by Mays and Pope (1995). According to these authors, qualitative research is concerned with a phenomenon, assumes multiple realities, data is in the form of rich verbal descriptions, researcher is immersed and in direct contact during data collection, data collection is highly interactive, data collection methodology evolves and is flexible, emphasises the holistic perspective, research is context sensitive, illuminate the invisibility of everyday life, construct meaning from the participants' point of view; and explores open questions rather than testing hypothesis. Some of these characteristics were applied to this study.

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

Enc (1999) defined research paradigm as a set of scientific and metaphysical beliefs that form a theoretical framework within which scientific theories can be tested, evaluated and if necessary revised. This study followed an interpretive research paradigm. As people give meaning to their social world, Photongsunan (2010) argued that interpretive research seeks to investigate how humans perceive and make sense of this world. Consistent with Photongsunan's (2010) view, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011) claimed that interpretivist researchers discover reality through participant's view, their own background and experiences. According to Photongsunan (2010), interpretive studies are often idiographic, using a small number of participants. This is because the aim is not to generalise but to explore the meaning which participants place on the social situation under investigation. This study used a small sample of six teachers, making interpretive research paradigm suitable for this study.

In order to explore participants' understanding of parental involvement in children's education, an interpretive research paradigm provided a context that allowed the researcher to examine what the participants in the study have to say about their experiences of parental involvement. This paradigm is subjective in nature (Thanh & Thanh, 2015), and the goal of this research was to value subjectivity so as to allow participants to describe their experiences as they lived them.

### **3.4 Study sample**

The study was conducted in the two selected primary schools, involving teachers who teach at the selected primary schools and they are all Black Africans. This study consisted of six teachers, three at each of the two selected primary schools in Bohlabela district. Thus the sample constituted of two teachers in foundation phase (one from each school), two teachers in intermediate phase (one from each school), and two teachers in senior phase (one from each school).

The researcher made use of key informants, that is, the principals of the schools to help identify the participants. The process that the researcher used to select participants is called sampling. Flick (2007) stated that sampling includes both the selection of people to be interviewed as well as the selection of sites in which such people can be expected to be found. To select the schools, a convenience sampling technique was used. Convenience sampling refers to researching subjects of the population that are easily accessible to the researcher (Etikan, Musa, & Alassim, 2016). This method was chosen to select the schools as it was found affordable and easy.

A purposive sampling technique was used in the study. Babbie (2013) asserted that this technique is an example of a non-probability sampling technique in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative. This type of sampling was appropriate for this study as the selections of participants was done on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population, its elements and nature of the research purpose (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). The researcher was aware of the role-players (staff) in the schools who were likely to be information-rich in respect of the purpose of the study.

The participants were purposefully selected to ensure that they have the requisite experience, knowledge and insights related to the research topic, thereby ensuring that their responses indeed generated credible and rich data that met the aim and objectives of the study. Purposefully selecting participants in qualitative research assist the researcher to best understand a problem and the research question (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

The criteria used to select participants in this study was based on the criteria suggested by Kelly (2006) who posited that the selection of participants should be based on the discretion of the researcher as to which subjects would best suit the process of answering the research questions. The researcher included participants with five years or more experience in teaching to allow only participants with more exposure to participate, both female and male teachers were included for participation, and lastly, only participants who were willing to engage in discussion about their expectations and perceptions on parental involvement were allowed to participate.

#### **3.4.1 Target population and description of selected schools**

According to Babbie and Benaquisto (2002), the population for the study is the group of people whom we want to draw conclusions about. For Frankel and Wallen (2009), these people must possess certain characteristics. The target population was drawn from the two selected primary schools from the Igincourt and Thulamahashe circuits. These circuits fall under the Bohlabela District of the Mpumalanga province. The population of the study emanated from the teachers in foundation phase, teachers in intermediate phase and teachers in senior phase.

For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, the two schools selected for the study are referred to as schools A and B. Both schools were public primary schools situated in Bushbuckridge,

Mpumalanga province. The schools are situated about 10km away from each other. It should be noted that the parents of the children who attend the school at these institutions are Black Africans. In these schools, children start their schooling in grade R at the age of five or turning six years after 30 June of the same year.

- **School A**

School A is a public school situated in the village called Kumana Trust in Bushbuckridge. This school falls under the Igincoort Circuit. During the researcher's visit to the school, she noticed that the physical structure of the school is well maintained and conducive to learning as per minimum requirements from the MPDoE. The furniture in the classrooms is enough to cater for each learner. In this school, the majority of learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds as most of these children's parents are unemployed and have low levels of education. Most parents in this school depend on social grant. The researcher also noticed that most children in this school do not have full uniform and they do not seem to care much about hygiene. The language of instruction in this school is their home language, Xitsonga and children are exposed to English when they reach grade 4. The children depend on feeding scheme provided by the school for their daily lunch, and they are exempt from paying school fees. Lastly, majority of children walk to school because they do not afford any form of transportation.

- **School B**

School B is a public school situated in Thulamahashe, Bushbuckridge. This school falls under the Thulamahashe circuit. Like school A, the physical structure of this school is well maintained and conducive to learning. The school is well resourced and their furniture is enough to cater for all learners. Contrary to school A, in this school the majority of learners come from advantaged backgrounds. This is not to suggest that these learners are wealthy but they have more resources when compared to school A learners because most of their parents have formal jobs and fall within the middle class. Unlike school A, the learners in this school bring or buy their own lunch, and they are expected to pay school fees each month. Majority of the learners have transport to school. Lastly, the language of instruction in this school is English and learners are expected to speak English within the school premises.

### **3.5 Data collection**

This study used face-to-face interviews as a mode for data collection. According to Creswell (2010), an interview is defined as a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks participants questions to collect data and to learn about the views, ideas, opinions, behaviours and beliefs of the participants. In this study, participants' views were elicited by means of semi-structured interviews.

### **3.5.1 Research instrument and procedure**

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were the favoured instrument to collect data. Struwig and Stead (2007) maintained that with semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a set of predetermined questions that can be presented to all interviewees systematically and consistently. This kind of interview structure was helpful as every participant was asked the same questions, allowing comparison of the answers from all participants. This design was considered for this study because of the following benefits. Firstly, the face-to-face interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to explore other aspects of the phenomenon during the interviews to gain in-depth insight to better understand the teachers' expectations of parental involvement. Secondly, individual semi-structured interviews were more convenient and the researcher and participants were able to clarify instantly questions and answers that were not clear. Thirdly, trust between the researcher and the participants was much stronger and sensitive issues were dealt with ease in an individual interview setting. In this regard, the participants reflected on events without having to commit themselves in writing, often because they felt the information was confidential which is contrary to the filling of questionnaires (Gray, 2009). Lastly, the use of semi-structured individual interviews allowed the researcher to probe for more detailed responses where the participants were asked to clarify what they have said. This approach was concerned with the meanings that people ascribe to phenomena (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

A semi-structured interview guide was provided based on the literature reviewed. The development of the semi-structured interview guide was informed by the objectives of the study and aligned to the research questions of the study. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to gain in-depth insight on teachers' expectations and perceptions of parental involvement and devise ways that can improve parental involvement. The semi-structured interviews

were conducted by the researcher, and were audio-recorded for reference and for transcription purposes after permission was granted by the participants.

In this study, the researcher followed the following procedure prior to conducting the interviews. A letter requesting permission to conduct research at the district schools was sent to the local Department of Education. A confirmation letter granting the researcher the permission to conduct research was used when requesting semi-structured interviews with the participants. A request for interviews was sent by email to key informants (principals of the schools), followed by telephone calls. Documents such as the permission letter to conduct research from the gatekeepers, ethics clearance letter from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, study information and consent forms accompanied the e-mail request for interviews. Once the opportunity was granted and consent forms signed and received by the researcher, the logistics such as venue and time of the interview were confirmed by the researcher and the participants.

In this study, the researcher collected data during visits to the schools. The researcher developed a visitation schedule which included all the people she wanted to interview and the amount of time she was to spend with each participant. The researcher made arrangements with the teachers of the primary schools in question regarding the dates and times of interviews so as to avoid disappointment where she would find that these teachers were not on sites. In addition, the researcher devised a means of recording responses (using a digital audio recorder) so that note-taking could not be time-consuming. However, the researcher first sought the permission from the participants before she could start recording the responses on the cellphone audio recorder. Although the researcher recorded the responses, she also made use of the notebook to take down notes and other more specific entries such as the date, the time, and the teachers' names.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Before analysing data, the researcher transcribed the recorded data into word format, and also translated it into English where applicable. This study used thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis and it is used to analyse classifications and present themes that relate to the data (Ibrahim, 2012). According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects through interpretations. This kind of analysis was suitable for the study because of its unobtrusive nature, allowing the researcher to investigate sensitive topics without altering the phenomena under study (Krahn & Putnam, 2005). It also involved coding participants' open-ended talks into closed categories, which summarises the data (Wilkinson, 2003), and this allowed the research question to be explored in more depth.

The themes or patterns of the study were identified through inductive thematic analysis. This form of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves and are not driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area or topic. Inductive approach is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that it is important to note that researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical commitments when applying an inductive approach to data analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) provided an outline of the six phases of thematic analysis to consider. According to these authors, some of the phases of thematic analysis are similar to the phases of other qualitative research, indicating that their stages are not necessarily all unique to thematic

analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) specified the main phases of thematic analysis as follows. Firstly, they indicated that the researcher must familiarise himself or herself with the data. This can be achieved through transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial ideas. The next phase is for the researcher to generate initial codes by coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set. Thirdly, the researcher must search for themes achieved through collating codes into potential themes as well as gathering all data relevant to each code. Reviewing themes follows after searching for themes. In this case the researcher is required to check if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. The next phase involves defining and naming of themes. Here the researcher focuses on ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, the overall story the analysis tells as well as generating clear definitions and names for each theme. The last phase is for the researcher to produce the report. This phase is the final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature.

This study used the method of thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2016) because it is clear, organised and also generated a 6-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis as shown above.

### **3.7 Reliability, validity and rigour**

Qualitative research has been criticised as being lacking reproducibility and generalisability (Mays & Pope, 1995). Critics such as Golafshani (2003) resisted the temptation to even address such matters as validity and reliability in qualitative research as they argued that these concepts were originally developed in the quantitative tradition and are rooted in a positivist paradigm.

Despite this being said, it has been recognised that the need to address validity and reliability in qualitative study is inescapable. This notion is concurred by Creswell and Miller (2000) when they mentioned the importance of qualitative validation, that is, assessing whether the information obtained from the qualitative data collection is accurate. In this study, validation was achieved through the use of a member-checks approach. According to Guba (1981), member checks means the data and interpretations are continuously tested as they are derived with members of the various audiences and groups from which data are solicited. The validation of the study was tested whereby the researcher took summaries of the findings (major themes) back to the six participants in the study and asked them whether the findings were an accurate reflection of their expectations and perceptions. In order to achieve reliability of the study, a member-checks approach was supplemented by triangulation of the study drawn from several sources such as transcript, participants' non-verbal expression and literature since triangulation involves the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources, and theories to obtain corroborating evidence (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

The trustworthiness/rigour of the study was achieved through a focus on the following aspects. The significance of trustworthiness in research is that it assists the researcher to evaluate its worth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

- **Credibility-** This was achieved through the use of triangulation (interviews, literature reviewed and participants' non-verbal investigations) and member checks (where data and interpretations were tested with research participants). Lincoln and Guba (1994) argued that credibility can be strengthened through the researcher making a conscious effort to establish confidence in the accuracy of interpretation, and the fit between

description and explanation.

- **Dependability-** This was achieved through the use of audit trails through the data. An audit trail strategy involves an examination of the inquiry process and product to validate the data where a researcher accounts for all research decisions and activities to show how data were collected, recorded and analysed (Bowen, 2009). There was a clear audit trail of the study in the form of procedures that were followed, different methods that were used, the questions that were asked and how data was analysed.
- **Confirmability-** This refers to the degree to which the results of the inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Confirmability was achieved through the use of the audit trail and triangulation methods, showing the connection between data and the researcher's interpretations. The researcher coded and re-coded data, and themes were presented with supportive direct quotes from the datasets.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

Bryman (2012); Ogletree and Kawulich (2012); and Creswell (2013) all agree that ethical issues need to be anticipated and be carefully considered during the research process, starting from its design to its implementation until the final report write-up. These authors are of the same view that there are specific ethical issues that need special consideration, including obtaining consent from the research participants, assuring confidentiality of participants' information, avoiding deception, as well as avoiding any harm towards the participants and recognition of gatekeeping tendencies (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012). For De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011), ethical considerations include informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, voluntary participation and privacy. In addition, Frankel and Wallen (2009) stated that it is important to

inform participants on how the information or data they provide will be stored and utilised as well as how their confidentiality and privacy will be assured.

Before data could be generated in this study, certain ethical considerations were taken into consideration to ensure that the research was based on ethics standards of practice. It is a standard procedure that one needs to obtain informed consent to proceed with the research. Firstly, ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College Campus). The researcher wrote a letter to the Senior District Manager to ask for permission to interview the teachers who teach at the schools which are under his jurisdiction. In addition, the researcher wrote letters to the principals of the two selected schools asking their permission to interview their teachers. She also made arrangements with the teachers who were interviewed. Lastly, the researcher also obtained written informed consent from volunteering participants. Beforehand, the participants were briefed about the nature and purpose of the study.

In addition, before conducting semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to sign the consent forms which assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity, meaning that an appeal was made to participants not to discuss the information outside the research context. To record the interviews, permission was requested from the participants. The participants were assured that no names would be indicated in the final document. Lastly, participants were informed that all data would be stored on drop box to which only the research team (researcher, supervisor and co-supervisor) will have access.

Furthermore, the researcher strived to protect the dignity of participants by addressing them in a respectful manner, thereby creating a conducive or comfortable zone for them. It was also the

researcher's responsibility to not force the participants to take part in the study against their will (Allen, 2011). The researcher also treated the participants as experts, which in turn created a learning space for the researcher. Again, participants were informed that no monetary incentives would be offered to them and they would not have to pay for anything that would be needed or used on that day.

Lastly, data was recorded without mentioning of names. During research process, the recorded and transcribed data was stored in supervisor's office at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College Campus) where only the research team had access to it. Electronic data was only made available to the research team. No names of participants were indicated on the electronic data or hard copies.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

Chapter 3 provided an account of the research design and research paradigm used in the study. The chapter also outlined the methods used for data collection. The procedure employed to select the schools and participants and to analyse data was discussed in this chapter. Lastly, the researcher outlined the ethical issues considered to conduct this research. The findings of the study will be presented and analysed in the next chapter, chapter 4 and later discussed in chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings generated from the data collected regarding the teachers' perceptions on parental involvement. As discussed in chapter 3, the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. Two public schools of Bohlabela District in Mpumalanga province were selected for this study. A total number of three participants were interviewed in each school including one teacher in foundation phase, one teacher in intermediate phase and one teacher in senior phase. Therefore, six semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study as shown in the figure below. The data was analysed using inductive thematic analysis method whereby the researcher identified the main themes that generated from the study. It must be noted that questions were asked in English, and also in Xitsonga to accommodate teachers who did not feel comfortable conversing in English. Lastly, verbatim quotations were used to ensure that participants' voices remained intact in the presentation.

- **Description of participants**

Figure 4.1 represents the profile of participants in both schools.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Length of service</b>	<b>Highest qualification</b>
Teacher 1	M	22 Years	Diploma in Teaching
Teacher 2	F	24 Years	Diploma in Teaching
Teacher 3	M	23 Years	Diploma in Teaching
Teacher 4	F	26 Years	Diploma in Teaching
Teacher 5	F	10 Years	Degree in Teaching
Teacher 6	F	7 Years	Degree in Teaching

**Figure 4.1 The profile of participants in schools A and B respectively**

#### **4.2 Themes generated**

The data gathered from the six semi-interviews were presented into four main broad themes and sub-themes as shown in the figure below.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
<b>Theme one:</b> Teachers' perceptions on parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement</li> <li>• The expectations of teachers on parental involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Theme two:</b> School policy on parental involvement	

<b>Theme three:</b> Mode of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written communication</li> <li>• Verbal communication</li> </ul>
<b>Theme four:</b> Barriers to parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elderly-headed household</li> <li>• Parents' working conditions</li> <li>• Parents' educational background</li> <li>• Language of instruction in school</li> </ul>

**Figure 4.2 Themes in relation to teachers' perceptions on parental involvement in schools in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province**

### 4.2.1 Teachers perceptions on parental involvement

The participants in the study indicated that parental involvement is vital to children's learning. They share the sentiment that learners can perform well in school when their parents are involved in their learning. However, it was indicated by some participants that not all parents realise their role in their children's education. By this, these participants were referring to parents who do not involve themselves in learners' education. This is what participant 1, a grade 4 teacher in school A said about the involvement of parents in their school:

*'The issue that we have in our school is that majority of parents do not understand their role in helping their children with school work, and how to involve themselves. The responsibility is being shifted to us teachers and that adds more work on us; which was not supposed to be. It is now an issue that we as teachers have to deal with. Next thing you hear an angry parent coming to me as the class teacher and claims that I failed his/her child. He/she forgets that he/she was not doing anything to help the child throughout the year to make sure that their children progress to the next grade. So this is just one example of what we are dealing with. Whereas it is always good to work together''.* (P1, 31 July, 2017).

The response above signified that participant 1 was of the opinion that parents must recognise their role in their children's education to avoid shifting full responsibility to the teachers. It is

clear that this participant considered parents as important stakeholders in leading their children to pursue their academic dreams. In addition, participant 1 realised the need for parents and teachers to work in collaboration, which is one of the requirements for effective learning. Other participants shared the same view. Consistent with participant 1's response, participant 5, a grade 4 teacher in school B concurred that parents and teachers should work as a team to better the learners' education. She said that:

*"It always works better when parents and teachers are on the same page. When the child is struggling and both the teacher and the parent are aware of that, it's always easy to find proper assistance to the child. In my opinion, if parents and teachers have one goal, learners tend to benefit more. Although it is not possible for all parents to be involved, it is good to point out that in our school; some parents try to involve themselves in any way possible". (P5, 11 August, 2017)*

Although participants suggested that teacher-parent partnership is necessary and beneficial to learner's performance at school, their responses have also shown that this partnership is not satisfactory as some parents continue to be less involved in school matters. However, the responses given by participants in the study have shown that not all parents are less inclined to help their children with school work. They reported that a handful of parents do manage to involve themselves in their children's education. This suggested that some parents understand the role they are supposed to play in their children's learning.

According to participant 4, a grade 7 teacher in school B, when parents and teachers work in collaboration, learners develop greater appreciation of education, and in turn, take their schooling serious. In other words, a learner's motivation to learn increases as they see parents and teachers work as a team. Participant 1 concurred that if the child realises that parents and teachers know each other, he or she will know that his or her behaviour will be monitored both at

home and at school. In that way, there will not be any unsatisfactory behaviour coming from the learner. On this notion, participant 1 said the following:

*“Interacting with parents always helps. I have a child in my class and her family and I attend the same church. I do discuss the child with the parents after church many times; and the child is aware of my relationship with her parents. Seeing that I communicate with her parents; that motivates the child to do well both at home and at school. She knows that nothing she will do at home and I won’t know about and visa verse”*. (P1, 31 July, 2017)

On the same notion, this is what participant 4 said about collaboration between parents and teachers. She maintained that:

*“I have a good relationship with most of my learners’ parents. I have the parents’ contact numbers as it is a requirement of the school to have them for emergency reasons- such as when the learner gets sick while in school. What I do is that when I have a problem with the learner; I contact the parent while in class with the learner. Already the learner knows that nothing can be hidden. I ensure that the parent knows the truth about what the child did. Doing this helps the child to know that we (teachers) communicate with parents and it also helps to maintain the relationship between the parent and the teacher”*. (P4, 11 August, 2017)

The idea of collaboration between these two stakeholders can work well for the learners, provided that parents and teachers are willing to work together as the comments above suggested. There is no doubt that if partnership between parents and teachers exists and done properly, there is a potential that learners will perform better.

Similarly, participants argued that poor parental involvement can contribute to learners’ poor performance in school. From this argument, participants have shown that parents are to be

perceived as important partners in the learning of their children. Participant2, a grade 3 teacher in school A revealed that parents can assist learners to excel in school. She maintained that:

*“I have seen learners of involved parents doing great in their educational attainment. Yes, to see that parents are involved, it does help the child. It doesn’t have to be a biological parent. It can be any adult figure from the family. What I know is that learners always want to make their parents proud when they see that their parents are interested in their school work. Parents’ involvement in education is something we want for our learners but we have been getting negative response from parents’ ”. (P2, 31 July, 2017)*

Participant 6, a grade 3 teacher in school B also agreed that learners of involved parents tend to perform well in school. However, she also maintained that parental involvement is not the only predictor to learner’s high performance in school. Her response to this was as follows:

*“Parents’ involvement in school helps children to obtain higher marks in school as the children notice that parents are watching over their progress. But that doesn’t take away the fact that some children are able to do well under no parents’ supervision. So I always see this as something to do with how the child is able to cope as an individual with or without supervision from parents rather than saying that parental involvement predicts child’s overall performance”*

The responses above showed that these participants’ perception on parental involvement is that the learner will do well in school whenever a parent is involved. It should be noted that in words of participant2, a parent is not limited to the learner’s biological parent but refers to any adult figure that is available to assist the learner with school work. According to the comments above, a learner can benefit from having involved parents in education. However, it is worth noting that some learners can perform well in their education despite having involved parents as suggested

by the quote above. Nevertheless, participants in the study regarded parental involvement as something that can help learners to excel academically.

In addition, it seemed that when parents neglect their children's education; that does not only disadvantage the learner but also the teachers at large. To support the statement above, participant1 was dissatisfied with the way parents in their school have shifted their roles to teachers, which resulted in more workload for teachers. Participant 3, a grade 7 teacher in school A concurred that teachers have now taken a responsibility to manage children's behaviour due to lack of disciplinary measures at their respective homes. As a result, teachers' workload piles up.

Participant 3 elaborated on that point as follows:

*'When the parents are not involved what happens is that we teachers end up having more work to do than expected. Imagine having to teach the learner in class and also have to manage how a child relates to other children. It's like parents don't care about these children. All they do is to dump them (learners) to the teacher and the teacher has to manage both the child's doing in class and outside the class; whereas parents could teach their children ways to conduct themselves so that it wouldn't be an issue while the child is within the school premises. To be honest being a teacher is exhausting because we are overworked due to parents' inability to share duties with us. (P3, 7 August, 2017).*

Other participants also experienced extra workload created by uninvolved parents. These participants felt that parents are somewhat putting a strain on teachers as they continue to dump their children to schools. Participant6 argued that:

*"Throughout my experience, I have learned that most parents do not want to interfere with school matters. As this continued and still continues, I have decided to make peace. As a teacher I now know that I have to be more than a teacher to many learners. I don't only teach in class but also manage learners who struggle with bad behaviour which in return affects their relationships with other learners. That is how my journey has been like as far as I remember. Though it's difficult to do all that, Do I have a problem with it anymore? No''. (P6, 11 August, 2017)*

Although parental involvement has not been at the level in which both schools want it to be, it is clear from their comments that the participants are convinced about the importance of parental involvement in education. From this perception, participants identified factors that can influence parental involvement, including the teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement, and the expectations that teachers have on parental involvement. These factors are discussed in detail below.

- **The teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement**

It was found that the attitudes that teachers portray on parental involvement can impact on the participation of parents in children's education. According to participant 3, teachers should realise that they cannot run the schools alone. He said that teachers need to be in partnership with parents as parents are considered to be important stakeholders in children's learning. This participant discovered that majority of parents do not participate in their children's education because teachers and the school management team at large have negative attitude towards parental involvement. The same participant asserted that:

*“To run the school we need the help of parents. We cannot continue to have teachers or leaders who undermine the role of parents. It doesn't work like that. How do you expect parents to participate if you don't show them that you need them? It is totally wrong. Sometimes parents may be willing but if we (teachers) don't embrace them they won't contribute and learners won't do well even”.* (P3, 7 August, 2017)

It is clear that participant3 is of the opinion that parents have the role to play in the learners' education. However, the negative attitudes display by some teachers towards parental involvement can result in poor parental involvement in the schools. Learning from the comment above, parents may have interest in involving themselves in their children's education, but teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement can sometimes determine how well parents choose to be involved.

Other participants also claimed that teachers' attitudes on parental involvement can determine the level of parents' participation in education. They expressed that when the school welcomes parental involvement, parents are likely to assist learners with homework. These participants articulated their concern with learners who do not do homework as this was an indication to them that parents of these learners are not available to assist with homework. The participants rated parental involvement highly in that they believed parents can assist with instilling discipline in learners who fail to do homework. Participant4 highlighted that:

*“Parents are important in child's learning. We can work with them to help us discipline their children if they are not doing their homework. Remember the law does not allow us anymore to beat learners. So we rely on parents to help us with that especially when learners are not doing their work. (P4, 11 August, 2017)*

Participant6 ascribed learners' educational achievement to parental involvement. She revealed that learners who have received awards in school are mostly those whose parents are active in their participation. She was convinced that these learners could not have managed to receive awards had it not been for the support they receive from their families. She concurred with participant 3 and argued that schools should create an environment where parents' participation is encouraged at all times in order to support learning.

The comments above showed that participants believed that parental involvement can be used as a strategy to improve the performance of the learners, provided that teachers display positive attitudes when parents show interest in the learning of their children. Data collected proved that parents can assist with aspects that which the teachers are unable to reach. For example, the participants believed that they can use parents to assist with instilling discipline in learners, which is necessary for learners to perform their school duties as expected.

Although participants in the current study ranked parental involvement highly and encouraged teachers to show interest in parental involvement as much as they expect parents to, there were instances where participants felt that teachers' positive attitudes on parents' involvement in children's education were not enough to encourage effective parents' participation in learners' education. They highlighted that parents' willingness to get involved in school matters mostly predicts how often parents decide to be involved in school matters. This is seen in parents whom the participants felt they were not supportive towards their children's learning despite warm welcome from the schools. Participant 6 argued this point as follows:

*“Teachers can have good attitude towards parents, but it is the parent's choice if they want to be involved or not” (P6, 11 August, 2017)*

Some participants who are also parents in the schools admitted that it is somewhat challenging to keep up with the children's school work at times, and hence some parents appear as if they do not want to engage with school matters. For instance, participant 5 said that:

*“When I get home, I am already tired from work and I sometimes don't check my child's work, but I know she has homework to do because she is doing grade 7 in this school”. She further said that “I imagine is the same thing that could possibly be happening to the*

*parents; they can't always check the books due to other commitments". (P5, 11 August, 2017)*

On probing, participant5 indicated that she does not always give her learners homework. Being a parent herself, she is aware of some of the contributing factors to poor parental involvement. She said that she prefers doing the work in class rather than sending learners with work to do at home. Participant2 concurred with participant5 as she has indicated that she would consider doing the work with learners in class to avoid tension with learners who do not do homework.

- **The expectations of teachers on parental involvement**

Data collected has shown that the expectations that teachers have on parental involvement can contribute to parents' participation in learners' education. According to the results of the study, understanding what teachers perceive parental involvement to be can provide valuable insight into the effective measures that teachers can take to improve parental involvement. The participants under investigation expressed that the schools may begin to develop the necessary skills needed to implement best practices to involve parents when teachers increase their knowledge of their expectations and beliefs on parents' participation in education. In this regard, participant6 stated the following:

*"We (teachers) usually expect parents to be involved, but I think as teachers, we need to understand first what is meant by parental involvement and our expectations thereof. Once we know exactly how we want parents to involve themselves; it would be easier for us to engage with them". (P6, 11 August, 2017)*

The evidence above serves to confirm that teachers rated their expectations on parental involvement highly in that their expectations were congruent to how the schools begin to involve parents. Participant3 was of the opinion that when the school perceives parents' role as that of being involved with the school, teachers are more likely to create parents involvement initiatives that encourage effective parental participation. Consequently, participant5 believed that if the school does not expect parents to be involved in their children's education, that can too impact negatively on how the school promotes parental involvement.

In this study investigating teachers' expectations on parental involvement, the participants highlighted ways in which they expect parents to be involved in their children's learning. These participants expect parents to assist learners with schoolwork. When asked how parents could assist in this regard, participant1 asserted that:

*“Parents should be able to have a moment where they sit down with the learner and read with them. They (parents) should be able to detect before us where the learner is lacking as they read with them. In that way parents can help the child learn fast”.* (P1, 31 July, 2017)

Participant 4 concurred with participant 1 and she described her ideal type of parental involvement as follows:

*“Parents need to encourage learning even at home whereby they (parents) check their children's work at all times. When the child is doing their homework, parents must check the child's progress. Parents must not let the children to do the work on their own but they must always be there to monitor how they do it. Monitoring the child's work helps a lot. If they (parents) encounter problems with their learning, then they can speak to us so that we can find ways to help the child”.* (P4, 11 August, 2017)

Undoubtedly, teachers supported that learners should receive assistance with schoolwork at home as that can be used as a strategy to speed up their learning. The importance of this is that parents could spot earlier the learning problems that learners might have before they come to teachers' attention. What seems to have emerged from this is that teachers expect parents to be able to identify if the children are experiencing learning difficulties when they assist them with schoolwork.

The comments above showed that participants under study have their ideal type of parental involvement which they believe can help facilitate children's learning. In addition to helping learners with school work at home, participants seem to expect parents to create a supportive learning environment at home by making the home a place conducive to learning. They argued that the parents must see to it that they provide for the basic learning materials such as story books. Furthermore, the participants highlighted that parents should strive to avoid conflicts amongst family members especially in front of the children. They believe that when parents engage into fights, for instance, it will affect the learners' concentration to study. Participant 2 elaborated this expectation as follows:

*“It is not good that parents fight in front of the child because the child will lose focus and spend most of his/her time worrying about the parents; if they will get divorced soon or not. So it is the responsibility of parents to make sure that they avoid such behaviour especially when the child is watching”.* (P2, 31 July, 2017).

The quote above proved that teachers are not only concerned with the learner's performance at school but also care about the learner's psychological wellbeing. It is clear that participants are of the view that when parents engage into fights in the presence of the child, such behaviour does not only affects the child's ability to concentrate at school, but also threatened his or her

overall mental ability to function under such conditions. It is therefore understandable why these participants expect parents to avoid such behaviours for the sake of the learners' overall wellbeing.

#### **4.2.2 School policy on parental involvement**

Participants in both schools indicated that it is crucial to have a policy on parental involvement that the teachers rely on in their efforts to involve parents in their children's education. The data collected suggested that it is challenging to apply appropriate measures to involve parents in the absence of a clear policy that guides the actions and practices concerned with the management of effective parents' participation programmes. On probing, all participants were in agreement that the schools must have a written policy on parental involvement that they refer to in their attempt to involve their learners' parents. However, it was discovered during the interviews with school A teachers that there was a lack of evidence to suggest that school A has a written policy on parental involvement. Although this school has no policy written down on parental involvement, the teachers interviewed admitted that the school must consider having it. Participant 3 answered the following when the researcher asked him whether or not their school has a policy on parental involvement:

*"I have never seen the school policy on parental involvement. If it was written somewhere, I believe all teachers could have it in their files. The principal might have it in mind but I don't think it is documented anywhere". (P3, 7 August, 2017)*

Participant3 continued to express his dissatisfaction with the absence of policy on parental involvement in their school. He said that:

*“There should be a platform where all teachers and the principal sit down and talk about the policy on parental involvement and how to implement it. If it’s existing somewhere, it is important that we sit together and check if its inline with the School Act. If the principal has it, it needs to be reviewed maybe after two years or so”.* (P3, 7 August, 2017)

Despite there being no written policy on parental involvement in school A, other participants were confident that they knew what to do to ensure that they involve parents in learners’ education. On this basis, participant1 responded that:

*“I am aware of the policy on parental involvement. I did training on Code of Ethics for two weeks, and we also learned about parental involvement. We might not have it written down in ourschool,but I know that teachers must form good relationships with parents and also communicate with the parents regarding the learner’s progress”.* (P1, 31 July, 2017)

Although participant2 did not have the privilege to receive training on parental involvement, she also maintained that she was well informed about how to involve parents in their children’s education through reading. She responded as follows:

*“I have not received any training on it but I have come across it through reading that parental involvement is part of the School Act. We don’t talk a lot about it in our school but I know about it and I try to get parents of my learners involved.With the little knowledge I have on this matter, I know that parental involvement means that you encourage parents to help with homework and just to be concerned about their children’s conduct both at school and at home”.* (P2, 31 July, 2017)

The results of the study also indicated that school B has a written policy on parental involvement which is reviewed by the school committee in all meetings. It was further highlighted that the policy has been communicated with parents in the meetings. Participant5 emphasised that:

*“We have the school policy on parental involvement and our parents know about it; and they know we expect them to be part of their children’s learning. Those who are in the school committee check if we are involving parents accordingly; and it helps us to know when and how to involve parents”.* (P5, 11 August, 2017)

Here participant5 was in agreement that the policy assists teachers in their efforts to involve parents in learners’ education. The same participant was asked how she felt about the establishment of the policy in their school. She answered that:

*“I did not have negative feelings whatsoever about it; I would probably have not known the right ways to engage with parents had I not familiarised myself with it. So I think it gives us direction on what to do”.* (P5, 11 August,2017)

On the question of how the policy assist teachers in getting the parents involved in their children’s education, participant4 replied that:

*“Basically, there are list of things that are written on the policy. It speaks about how to involve parents. Like calling in a meeting when you want to discuss the child with the parents; asking them to sign the child’s work and other things. The policy basically teaches us ways to engage with them (parents)”.* (P4, 11 August, 2017)

The responses above indicated that participants agree that a written policy on parental involvement can give them guidance on how to involve parents. Some participants approved the notion of having a written school policy on parental involvement because according to them it is

then that teachers know how to engage parents in their children's education. However, it does not mean that teachers would not know how to involve parents in the absence of a written policy, as the comments suggested above. Nevertheless, evidence has shown that the written school policy on parental involvement serves as a guideline to teachers as they attempt to involve parents, when used effectively.

#### **4.2.3 Mode of communication**

The teachers of both schools posited that a formal school policy on parental involvement can enhance the level of communication between the school and the parents. They maintained that it is only when the school uses its policy to involve parents that teachers can be able to interact with parents effectively. As indicated before, participants in this study argued that it is important that teachers communicate with parents so that they stay updated on the child's overall performance. In light of this, a question then arose on how teachers communicate with parents to ensure that these parents are informed of their children's progress. Participants discussed various methods that the schools employ in their attempt to communicate with parents. These methods included both written and verbal modes of communication as discussed in the sections below.

- **Written communication**

Participants in both schools indicated that the schools make use of letters and homework books as a means to interact with parents. In addition to that, participants in school B noted that they have implemented messaging services in their school which they described to be the most

effective and reliable method to date. Both schools rely on letters to inform parents about the next meeting and for notices or announcements, and to notify parents about the learner's behavioural concerns in school. When asked how the school carries out these approaches to communicating with parents, participant2 replied that:

*“We notify parents through letters when we have issues with the learner. For example, if a learner misbehaves at school; say engages in fights with other children, we write a letter to parents and ask them to come to school. Sometimes they come but majority of them don't come. (P2, 31 August, 2017)*

When answering the same question, participant6 replied the following:

*“We write to the parents whenever we have the next meeting or when we have urgent announcement to make and we can't wait for the next meeting. We also encourage them to write to us when necessary. Writing to each other enhances communication between the school and parents. But not all parents respond to the letters though”. (P6, 11 August, 2017).*

In addition, participant1 revealed that:

*“Most parents in our school don't take the letters serious no matter how much you write to them. They don't even bother to come see us. But in extreme cases where the child interrupts the functioning of the school, and then we threaten them to expel the child from school, they do come”. (P1, 31 July, 2017).*

Participant 1 was asked why some parents do not take the letters serious. He maintained that parents in their school are ignorant in that they do not take their children's education serious. He further stated that *“parents don't expect any communication from us (teachers); they expect that teachers manage all the school matters alone without them (parents) involving themselves”*.

Participants in both schools highlighted that the least effective method to communicate with parents is through homework books. According to them, parents are expected to sign at the end of each homework given to learners as a way to get parents informed about their children's academic progress. Participants have ranked this mode of communication less effective because they have noticed that many parents do not sign the books as required, and therefore there is less interaction between the teacher and the parent through this mode. The participants confessed that this has proved to them that many parents do not check learners' books as required. On this basis, participant3 expressed that:

*“Yes we use the homework book to communicate with parents. We ask them to sign at the end of every homework so that we know they check how their children are doing in school. But as always, most parents don't bother to sign. So it shows to us that many parents are not interested in their children's school progress”.* (P3, 7 August, 2017)

Participant5 shared the same sentiment with participant3 and she reiterated that:

*“You know asking parents to check homework and sign every time they looked at the work has not been helpful in our school. If the parents check the books, at least they will know how the child is doing at school and they can then come to school if the child is doing badly”.* (P5, 11 August, 2017)

Although teachers deemed it necessary that parents establish communication with teachers through the signing of their children's work, the results obtained from this study suggested that parents of the learners in these schools under study do not seem to have the same view regarding this matter. The responses above indicated that teachers are of the opinion that many parents in their schools are by far lacking in their role to keep up with their children's school work. In addition, it was learned from the teachers' responses that while there are some parents that

respond to the letters from the schools, there are others that do not, proving that not all parents are interested in their children's performance at school. The function of the two modes of communication discussed above was to strengthen communication between the school and parents. However, the comments given above proved that these two methods have not been effective as per teacher expectation.

After thorough investigation, participants learned that some learners hindered the communication between parents and teachers. These participants exposed that learners especially those that are performing poorly in their studies and those with behavioural difficulties in school do not send letters to parents or neither do they show parents homework books in a hope to avoid embarrassment that could result from their own difficulties in school. To improve communication with parents, school B has implemented messaging services whereby parents are notified directly through SMS's of any announcements. Participants in school B described this method as being the most convenient and effective way of communicating with parents.

Participant4 proudly noted that:

*“After discovering that letters do not reach home, we then thought of this messaging system. We know that if letters don't reach parents, at least the message is received anyway. The SMS system has been helpful and our communication with parents has improved because parents can SMS us back”.* (P4, 11 August, 2017)

It is apparent that school B values effective communication between the school and parents, and this is seen in their efforts to implement messaging system despite the challenges encountered with the other two methods. School A has also displayed their interest in communicating with the parents as seen in their attempt to send letters and homework books to parents. However, their commitment to this seems limited as there was no indication during data collection to suggest

that they have attempted to implement a new communication system that could bring positive results upon seeing that the two existing methods were failing to bring desired results. Overall, participants valued the communication between the schools and homes because it is through communication that teachers can succeed in engaging with parents.

- **Verbal communication**

Participants admitted that not only do they communicate with parents in a form of writing but also verbally. They mentioned that the most common form of verbal communication between teachers and parents is through parents' meetings. According to participants, the schools conduct general meetings with parents about twice a year. These annual meetings are inaugurated by SGB wherein there is parents' component in it. For these participants, the purpose of these gatherings is to address all the concerns that both the parents and teachers might have regarding the learners, thereby giving parents an opportunity to be involved in their children's education. Furthermore, during the meetings, feedback regarding the learner's overall progress and behaviour is given to the parents. Participant4 elaborated that:

*“Basically, we have parents' meeting two times in a year. When we meet with parents, every class teacher discusses his/her learners with their parents. When parents have questions, they then get the opportunity to ask the teacher”.* (P4, 11 August, 2017)

On enquiry, participant4 said that the school management has chosen to not have more meetings with parents because they understand that parents have other things to do and they won't always attend meetings at school. Participant 6 concurred that *“I don't see a problem with having only a*

*few formal meetings with parents. We do not only rely on the meetings to speak to parents. When it's urgent, we do call parents individually to discuss with them".*

Although participants deemed it necessary to have meetings with parents, it was evident that majority of parents do not intend to attend the meetings as revealed by participant2 when she emphasised that:

*"We organise meetings, but many parents do not attend and you find that only a handful of parents attend, or only SGB parents attend the meeting. The causes of this could be that parents are busy or they are away". (P2, 31 August, 2017)*

In such cases where parents do not attend parents' meetings, the participants indicated that the schools invite parents individually to come to school whenever teachers have concerns to convey to parents regarding a particular learner. Such meetings are not formal but parents are invited at any time of the year when necessary. Participant6 conveyed the following:

*"We don't wait for parents' meetings to actually speak to parents about their children. If there is a problem, we invite that particular parent to come to school so that we can discuss the child". (P6, 11 August, 2017)*

Participant1 concurred that:

*"Because most parents don't like discussing their troublesome children in front of other parents, we normally try to invite them separate so that they can feel free to talk about anything". (P1, 31 July, 2017)*

Parents are also expected to approach the schools whenever they have issues to discuss with teachers. Some participants expressed that the schools are always open to welcome visits from

parents. Participant3 explained that it is the expectation that teachers have that parents visit the school to learn about their children's progress. Although teachers expect parents to make efforts to engage with the school, most participants stressed that parents rarely take that initiative. To support this, participant1 highlighted his frustration at this:

*“Parents are always welcome to visit the school at any time they wish to do so; no one stops them but they never take advantage of that. They will wait for the invite from the school, which they also attend when it suits them”.* (P1, 31 July, 2017)

It was revealed that the schools also contact parents telephonically as a means to strengthen communication between the school and home. The findings have shown that the teachers usually contact parents telephonically when parents missed parents' meetings without notifying the schools. The motive behind contacting parents telephonically is to encourage parents of their role to stay in touch with the school regarding their children's performance at school, as participant5 said it.

*“We phone parents who have not been coming to meetings or when we haven't heard from them in a long time. We remind them to keep in touch with the school so that they know what is happening with their children. Just for them to show interest in what is happening here at school”.* (P5, 11 August, 2017)

It was seen from the comments above that communication between the school and home can enhance parental involvement greatly. Evidence indicated that when the school employ an open door policy where parental participation is encouraged, parents tend to feel welcome to take part in their children's education. In addition, both schools under study displayed various methods to communicate with parents which occurred in the form of writing as well as verbally. Some

methods were proven to be more effective and convenient than others. It was noted that communication with some parents was limited due to their difficulty to engage with the school or their inability to initiate communication with the schools, and thus remained passive in their role at all times. Despite these challenges, the findings have shown that teachers promote communication between the schools and parents.

#### **4.2.4 Barriers to parental involvement**

The participants under study identified the following barriers as contributing factors to poor parental involvement.

- **Elderly-headed household**

Participants indicated that many of their learners are taken care of by grandparents. According to these participants, most grandparents do not involve themselves in education as they lack necessary skills to do so. In her response, participant 2 highlighted the causes for “grandparents-headed families”. She argued that:

*“It is common for most of our learners to stay with their grandparents while their parents stay somewhere else (referring to cities such as Johannesburg). Many of our learners’ parents are single mothers and you find that they stay away from home, maybe in Johannesburg due to employment. Grandparents are then forced to take care of these learners because they stay with them full time. Grandparents are also expected to be involved in the children’s education since they are the only available adults to help the children while their parents are away. But parental involvement in our school continues to decrease because most grandparents are illiterate”.* (P2, 31 July, 2017).

The response above indicated that a number of grandparents raising the learners continue to grow due to lack of job opportunities in this rural area, which have led to many parents of the learners seeking jobs in the cities where job opportunities exist. This has resulted in grandparents taking over the needs of the learners including being involved in the learners' education. The participants speculated that the involvement of grandparents in children's education has not been a success so far due to these grandparents' lack of skills to engage in school matters.

Although participant6 agreed with participant2 in that majority of their learners are being taken care of by illiterate grandparents, which in turn reduces the level of parental involvement, she stated that some parents of their learners do manage to involve themselves in their children's education despite being away from home. She argued that:

*“Although most of our learners' parents work far, some parents do indirectly involvement themselves. When we have a serious problem with the child and we know that the grandparent can't do much; we contact the parent and you find that the parent takes a leave from work and come see the teacher concerned. That shows that the parent desires to be part of their children's learning but distance constrain them. If they can't come back to see us, most of them call us and we try to attend to the matter telephonically. As we know sometimes parents are busy and they won't always have time to speak with us, some concerned parents do send relatives or friends to the school to come speak to us”. (P6, 11 August, 2017)*

The comments given by these participants exposed a clear discrepancy in how parents show their commitment in their interaction with the teachers. While some parents have not been reported to have made extra efforts to engage with the school when they are away, the data collected indicated that some parents seem to be not hindered by the distance in their efforts to engage with the school or teachers. Their involvement is evident in their interest to engage with the school telephonically, taking leaves from work or sending the other to the school when they are

unable to speak to the teachers themselves. This is to say that parents have different views on when as well as how to engage with their children's schools.

It was also discovered during the interviews that not only do grandparents struggle with engagement with the schools. The generation gap between the grandparent and the grandchild was found to be more profound than most grandparents fail to cope with the learners. Participant 4 reported that:

*“The age gap between the grandparent and the learner is the serious issue; and you find that these poor “gogos” (which is translated grandmothers) can't cope at all with the learners. Learners are young and have more energy, and they generally need someone with more energy to raise them. Grandparents are just too old for that. Many things that parents could do, these grandparents can't do such as checking if the learner has bathed done his/her homework. I believe grandparents are staying with the learners because they(learners) have no one else to take care of them when parents are away but they generally can't cope with them and they can't apply their old style of parenting on these learners”.* (P4, 11 August, 2017)

It is clear from this response that participant 4 was of the opinion that grandparents assumed parenting responsibility for these learners because they are forced by circumstances to do so. It is evident from the findings that it can be challenging for old parents to raise the learners because they are believed to be going through physiological changes associated with old age. The results have shown that parents possess the capacity to cope better with the learners because it is believed that the age difference between the parent and the learner is less profound than it is between the grandparent and the learner. Furthermore, it was apparent from the response above that grandparents cannot depend on their past parenting experience to raise the learners, and this could explain why grandparents find it challenging to raise the learners and to also involve themselves in the learners' education.

- **Parents' working conditions**

Apart from that parents stay far from home which resulted in most learners staying with uninvolved grandparents, participants posited that parents' working conditions can limit their involvement in their children's education even when they reside with their children. For these participants, this is due to that most parents work long hours and as such, no time is left for them to involve themselves in school matters such as helping the learner with homework or attending meetings at school. Participant 4 maintained that:

*"It is difficult for working parents to be involved because they are already tired from work. When they get home at five or six because that's when their day normally ends; it's already late and their work has already taken so much energy from them". (P4, 11 August, 2017)*

Participant 2 added that:

*"We have seen that even coming to school meetings can be challenging for working parents because they don't find time during the week to visit the school". (P2, 31 July, 2017).*

On this notion, participant 6 admitted that:

*"We can't blame parents for working far from home. It is important that they work because they need the money to take care of their families. The children who need educational support from home are the same children who need financial support from these parents". (P6, 11 August, 2017)*

Clearly, parents' working conditions can hinder parents from participating in their children's education. The responses given above have shown that parents particularly those who work long hours and come back home late have difficulty in engaging with their children's schools. Although such working environment has been proven to be a barrier to effective parental involvement, participants under study admitted that it is necessary for parents to have employment in order to be able to provide for learners' financial needs. In other words, parental involvement and parents' employment are equally important in the child's life. What stemmed from the comments is that parents are now caught in a dilemma of having to choose between their employment and their involvement in their children's education. However, guided by the responses above where participants are not satisfied with the involvement of most working parents in children's education, it is clear that parents have chosen to secure their spot in their workplace over their participation in the learning of their children. This suggests that parents lack the ability to manage these two important aspects in the learners' lives.

- **Parents' educational background**

The participants confirmed that parents' limited educational experience amount to a serious barrier to parental involvement. According to these participants, this is mostly evident in cases where the learner is taken care of by grandparents. As indicated before, they argued that most of their learners stay with their grandparents. The participants revealed that these grandparents lack the relevant skills to involve themselves in education. To confirm this, participant 3 added the following:

*‘Majority of our learners live with grandparents, and as we know grandparents are old and uneducated, they do not know how to help. They cannot help learners with homework simply because they do not understand. They can’t help them because they are also helpless’.* (P3, 7 August, 2017)

This is corroborated by participant6 in her response. She said that:

*‘The problem is often noticed for most of our learners who stay with grandparents. Grandparents do not have the ability to help learners with school work. We communicate in English when we write letters to home and most of these parents (grandparents) can’t read. They believe that they do not have to interfere with school work. I think the reason for lack of parental involvement is that many parents feelintimidated by us. If a parent can’t speak or read English;thelanguage that we use here in our school,it’s difficult for them to even involve themselves in school matters.* (P6, 11 August, 2017)

Participants were asked what the teachers have done to encourage parental involvement in such cases where grandparents are illiterate. The responses indicated that the schools have not taken any action to psycho-educate grandparents regarding the importance of parental involvement and also ways they can involve themselves. Participant 3 added the following:

*‘We haven’t spoken to grandparents about this yet. We want to speak to the parents themselves but they are nowhere to be found. In my opinion, I think it’s unfair to feed grandparents with information they don’t understand. Honestly, we haven’t done anything regarding this issue’.* (P3, 7 August, 2017)

Participant 5 also responded that:

*“Due to lack of understanding with school matters because they are old and most of them are not educated, we have not spoken to grandparents about how they can involve themselves. We raise our concerns with parents themselves when they call us or come to meetings”.* (P5, 11 August, 2017).

It became evident from the above responses that parental involvement could be limited by the lack of confidence in illiterate grandparents by teachers. As such, these parents and in this case grandparents may have believed that the teachers and the school at large require them to limit their involvement in learners' education because they do not show interest in partnering with them. Consequently, these parents (grandparents) shifted their responsibilities to the school. Furthermore, it is clear that the schools desire parents to be part of their children's education as evident in their wish to rather involve the learners' biological parents who are believed to be away from home. However, this wish has not been a success since most parents have been reported to be unavailable due to work.

The findings of the study have also shown that not all teachers had lost hope in grandparents. Some participants in the study showed that grandparents do matter in children's learning. According to these participants, grandparents are equally capable to influence the learning of their grandchildren. Participant1 argued that:

*“They (grandparents) cannot be able to help with homework, but they have a role to play too. The school must not turn them off; they are important too. They don't have to be educated or know the child's school work. Just being there for the child and also show interest in the child's education can help”.* (P1, 31 July, 2017)

Similar findings have shown that participant5 also believed grandparents can add value to the learner's education. She highlighted the following:

*“Even though they can't read or write but getting their grandchildren read or write something for them can help facilitate learning”.* (P5, 11 August, 2017)

The above comments demonstrated that grandparents have a vital role to play in shaping the learner's mindset and his or her motivation to learn. The results indicated that grandparents maybe unable to assist the learner with a specific subject area, but they do possess the ability to encourage positive attitudes in the learner's education through showing interest in the learner's education, and promoting reading and writing at home. In addition, the data collected has shown that grandparents need not to be educated to contribute in the learning of their grandchildren. Focusing on ways to create a stimulating home environment where learners can learn on their own is crucial.

Theseparticipants who believed grandparents have a role to play in the learners' education were asked a question on what they think can be done to improve parental involvement even when learners reside with illiterate grandparents. Participant 1 admitted that poor parental involvement can be eradicated if other family members who have gone to school are willing to assist learners with school work.In addition, participant5 thought that grandparents could assist with duties other than school work such as making sure that learners are safe at home, they eat as well as bath. This participant attributed therole of involvement with the school as that of family members other than illiterate grandparents.

- **Language of instruction in school**

In their views, participants introduced the language of instruction, English, as another factor that contribute to poor parental involvement in school matters.They claimed that teachers use English when they write letters to parents. According to these participants, majority of parents are reluctant to communicate with the schools because they think that they cannot use any language

other than English to communicate with teachers. As a result, this opinion hinders parents to engage with the schools because most of these parents have limited capacity to engage in English. Participant 6 argued this point by saying the following:

*“I blame the school sometimes for allowing teachers to communicate with parents in English when they write letters to them. This idea separates us (referring to teachers and parents) because parents always think that they can only communicate with teachers in English. Sometimes parents avoid speaking to us because they don’t want to feel less around us”.* (P6, 11 August, 2017).

In addition, participant 1 expressed his view as follows:

*“I have noticed that many parents do not reply to school letters. I think that most of them do not understand English and they feel embarrassed having to respond to something they don’t understand. It is the same thing in school meetings, when you start addressing things in English, you can just see that no one is listening”.* (P1, 31 July, 2017).

Other participants disagreed with the comments above as they did not consider language as a barrier to parental involvement in the schools. They claimed that it is not always the case that teachers communicate to parents in English. They added that teachers are aware that not all parents understand English, and hence they cannot use it with every parent. These participants said that parents with limited capacity to understand English are encouraged to write or report to the schools at all times so that other means could be taken to improve communication between the teachers and parents. Lastly, they revealed that parents are also encouraged to indicate to the teacher concerned if they encounter challenges in helping the learner with schoolwork due to language barrier. Participant 4 postulated that:

*“Language is not really an issue. Teachers can always communicate in a language that parents are comfortable in. Other thing is that if parents can’t help with homework because of language; we encourage them to report to us so that we are aware of that and find ways to assist where possible”.* (P4, 11 August, 2017)

The findings have shown that participants have varied views on how the language of instruction at schools impact on the communication between the schools and the homes. While some participants viewed this as a potential to hindering effective parental involvement particularly for parents who have limited capacity to understand English, other participants demonstrated a different view to this. They believed that efforts can always be made to accommodate such parents such as making sure that teachers communicate with parents in a language that they are most comfortable with.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the presentation of findings from the data generated from the semi-structured interviews. The data were presented in the form of four themes which captured the responses and reflections of the six teachers from the two selected primary school in the Bohlabela District of Mpumalanga province in the Republic of South Africa. The first theme identified comprised of the teachers’ perceptions on parental involvement. The findings indicated that participants view parental involvement as crucial to children’s learning as evidence from the study has shown that learners of involved parents are more likely to perform well in school when compared to those learners whose parents are uninvolved. Although participants viewed parental involvement as essential to learner’s education, their responses indicated that some parents

continue to disconnect themselves from their children's education. These participants identified two factors that teachers have to be aware of if they were to assist parents to realise their role in the learner's education. According to them, it is crucial for teachers to display positive attitudes towards parental involvement, and also increase their knowledge of their expectations on parents' participation because these two factors are believed to be congruent to how the schools involve parents.

The second theme identified was the school policy on parental involvement. According to the participants, it is necessary that the schools have a written policy that guides their practices concerned with effective parental involvement. Mode of communication was identified as the third theme in this study. The findings revealed that both schools rely on both written and verbal means of communicating with parents such as letters, homework books, messaging services and parents meetings. The last theme identified entailed the barriers to parental involvement. The participants recognised four factors that are believed to be contributing to poor parents' participation in learners' education including elderly-headed household, parents' working conditions, parents' limited educational experience and language of instruction in school. These themes will be discussed in relation to the literature in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a synthesis of the discussion of the findings raised in the study regarding teachers' perceptions on parental involvement in the two selected schools in Mpumalanga province. What is implied by the findings of the study is discussed in relation to the literature on parental involvement, and the teachers' perceptions and expectations on parents' participation among the teachers who have over five years of experience in teaching. The perceptions of the six teachers interviewed in chapter 4 are discussed in this chapter. Four major themes and subthemes emerged from the teachers' accounts. The themes included teachers' perceptions on parental involvement, school policy on parental involvement, mode of communication, and barriers to parental involvement. These themes are discussed and analysed in this chapter in relation to the literature reviewed as indicated below.

### **5.2 Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement**

Literature has shown that parental involvement in children's education has long been recognised as a key to assisting children to overcome learning difficulties (Linek, Rasinski, & Harkins, 1997). Henderson (1998) reviewed 43 studies on the subject and discovered that almost any form of parent's participation in the learner's education appears to produce measurable gains in the learner's achievement. Likewise, the findings of the current study have also shown that parental involvement has gained valuable support in children's learning. The participants under study indicated that parental involvement helps learners to perform well in their studies. The teachers in

Linek et al's. (1997) study offer similar value to the importance of parental involvement in the child's academic performance. These teachers argued that parental involvement is the strongest support in helping learners to achieve their academic goals. The findings above show that teachers support the notion that parental involvement can have a positive impact on learners' academic achievement.

Moreover, teachers in Stanikzai's (2013) study were of the view that parental involvement is very essential in all grade levels. However, comparing the different levels, these teachers think that parents' participation is more essential in the early primary grades. Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) concurred that most teachers want and require parental involvement particularly in the early years of the child's schooling. These authors further suggested that parental involvement in the child's early years of learning provides the basic groundwork for the child's acquisition of the mechanics of learning. It was for these reasons that the current study was conducted in primary schools. The teachers in the current study held a belief that parental involvement in learner's education comes in various forms and thus changes as the child progresses to higher grades. They emphasised that parents' engagement with the learner's school is essential especially in the early years of the learner's education. As the result, they encouraged parents to always get involved in the education of their learners.

Various studies on parental involvement indicated that teachers display varied perceptions regarding parents' participation in education of their children. It was found in a study of Shahzad, Ullah, Ali, Ali-Shah, Asif and Alam (2016) that teachers' opinion on parental involvement entailed parents' regular and constant contact with the school. According to these authors, the contact may be direct with the teachers at the school or in the form of any social networking applications such as WhatsApp, and Skype. Teachers in Stanikzai's (2013) study

agreed with the teachers' definition of parental involvement expressed in Shahzad et al's (2016) study and argued that parental involvement includes parents' awareness of and their efforts to support their children's learning in and out of school. Overall, teachers view parental involvement as the efforts made by parents to support their children's learning during the child's school years (Avvisati, Besbas, & Guyon, 2010). In keeping with the above, the teachers in the present study maintained that parental involvement involves all activities designed to assist learners with learning such as helping children with school work as well as for parents and families to cooperate and acquiesce to the needs of the school. Despite there being differences in how parental involvement is perceived by teachers and also operationalised in practice, their descriptions of the meanings of parental involvement seem to suggest that there is a serious need for parents to work closely with learners and the schools if learners are to perform well academically.

The notion that including parents in the learner's education can critically enhance the learner's performance has been supported by research conducted with teachers. For instance, in the research done by Rivera (2010), teachers perceived parental involvement in education as positively related to learner's achievement. This was also a finding in the current study. The participants expressed that the greater the parents' involvement and interaction with the school, the better the child's academic attainment. De Planty, Coulter-Kern and Duchane (2007) expressed similar findings. They argued that teachers have found that parent-child discussions about schoolwork play a positive role in improving the child's academic achievement. Furthermore, De Planty et al (2007) revealed that teachers in their study defined parents as the learner's first and important teachers. With this knowledge, there is a need for parents to actively participate in their children's education should they want to see their children succeed in their

academic lives. The same was spoken by the teachers under study when they argued that they encourage the parents of their learners to fully take charge of their children's education.

It has been discovered in the present study that learners of involved parents are more likely to excel in their studies. The teachers gave evidence that children of involved parents receive more achievement awards than learners of uninvolved parents. On this notion, Shahzad et al (2016) argued that the participation that parents offer towards their children's education can serve to compel children to be involved in academic activities which increase their academic achievement. Thus, it can be said that the child's academic achievement also depends upon the nature of attention and support parents provide for the sake of their children's better school achievement.

Although literature has documented that parental involvement is an integral component of learners' life, evidence gathered from interviews with teachers in the current study has revealed that parents' participation could be challenging. The teachers interviewed exposed that most parents are uninvolved and uncooperative in their children's school activities. These teachers had the impression that parents of their learners felt it was solely the teacher's responsibility to educate the learners, and the parents were burdened by the additional work to assist the learners with school work while at home. The teachers in Sethusha's (2014) study reported similar findings that most parents are not involved in their children's education. However, it should be noted that the teachers under study admitted that a few parents are involved in school activities, and contributing towards improving learner's performance. Likewise, teachers in Sethusha's (2014) study noted that a handful of parents are responsive and keep good contact with teachers, and even go to the extent of hiring private tutors to assist their children at home. Undoubtedly, the findings above show that the amount of participation that parents offer to their children's

education can positively contribute to effective learning. Adamski, Fraser and Peiro (2013) all agree that the learner's level of motivation to learn and self-confidence increases as they see their parents being concerned about their education.

Work by Lawson (2003) revealed that teachers are satisfied with the parents who are involved with the school. However, just as teachers in the current study, the teachers in Lawson's (2003) study lament the parents who are not involved. From this frame of reference, the teachers under study have found that parental involvement in school centric programs and activities is often minimal and parents continue to disengage themselves from the learner's education. Overall, there appears to be a high level of dissatisfaction and lack of parental involvement expressed by these teachers. Similarly, Linek et al (1997) placed more emphasis on uninvolved parents. Linek et al.'s (1997) findings appear to be fairly consistent with the findings in Lawson's study. That is, teachers believe that parental involvement is important and beneficial, but many parents do not have the time to be involved with their children's learning. These teachers hold a view that parents must be part of the learning of their children's education. Linek et al. (1997) further argued that parents' failure to be involved in their children's education result in problems that lead teachers to have negative perceptions in dealing with parents. In that note, a question then emerges on whether these negative perceptions are totally due to problems that teachers encounter when dealing with parents. Literature has shown that many factors can contribute to such feelings. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that this situation is just one of many factors that could contribute to these negative feelings. Some of these factors are discussed below including teachers' expectations and their attitudes towards parental involvement.

- **Expectations of teachers on parental involvement**

Although the voices to teachers' perceptions on parental involvement have been discussed above, need remains to further analyse and clarify the expectations that teachers articulate on parental involvement. The findings of this research have shown that this need is particularly silent, leading to confusion of roles between the parents and teachers in the learner's education. Participants under study indicated that if attention is given to this matter, clear expectations of parents' roles in education, embedded in the ways in which teachers and parents talk, think, and interact may become more readily apparent. Lawson and Briar-Lawson (1997) admitted that school reform efforts become impeded when the expectations of parents' participation are ambiguous, unclear and somewhat competing. For Lawson (2003), when teachers and parents have different and perhaps competing perceptions of the meanings and functions of parental involvement, that result in misunderstanding and conflict of roles between the two parties. The claim above was also true for the current study as the participants confirmed that they face challenges when parents do not know how to be involved in learner's education. They argued that learners benefit when these parents and teachers share common understanding of the roles they are expected to play. Therefore, it is important that these two parties (parents and teachers) perceive the functions and meanings of parental involvement at least compatibly or similarly if not identically.

There seems to be specific ways in which teachers expect parents to get involved in their children's education. Besides assisting with homework, the teachers under study expected parents to encourage learning at home by creating a supportive home environment conducive for learning. According to O'connor and Geiger (2009), teachers expect parents to bear the burden of responsibility for their children's education and act as their children's primary teachers. This indicates that these teachers acknowledge that parents are knowledgeable to assist their children

in learning. Other studies highlighted the roles that teachers expect parents to fulfil in their children's learning. A study by Singh, Mbokazi and Msila (2004) has shown that teachers expect parents to participate in the decision-making of the school as members of the SGB. The findings of the present study have also revealed that both schools under study have SGB members with parents' component in it, meaning these schools value the importance of having parents' views in the governing of the schools. In addition, teachers expect parents to participate in monitoring learner's attendance, learner's behavioural aspects as well as offering emotional support to the learner (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2007).

Teachers in Deslandes' (2009) study felt that part of the parents' responsibility consists of ensuring that the learner's homework is done by giving priority to homework ahead of other activities such as extracurricular. Likewise, the teachers under study expected parents to monitor the learners' progress when doing homework to ensure that learners' are doing the right thing. As Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) who expected parents to correct learners when they get answers wrong, teachers in the current study indicated that parents should be able to spot when learners are not doing their homework correctly. Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) believed that learners would be able to grasp what they learn at school if parents give them proper guidance. By proper guidance, these authors meant that parents must not do the work for their children, but simply let them (learners) do the work and only help when the learner needs to be corrected. Whilst parents are assisting learners with schoolwork, Deslandes (2009) said that teachers discourage parents to assume the role of the teacher as this would only confuse the learner. Given all the expectations highlighted above, it can be concluded that parents are perceived positively by teachers as possessing the capacity to guide the learners' academic progress.

- **Attitudes of teachers on parental involvement**

Participants in the current study accepted that parental involvement is driven by factors beyond teachers' expectations of acceptable practices from parents. They highlighted that teachers have attitudes and opinions which may influence their willingness to encourage parents' participation as a method of improving learner's performance. Jones, White, Aeby, and Benso (1997) defined teacher's attitude towards parental involvement as one's perceptions and ideas about the effectiveness of parents' instructional support of their children. The results of the present study indicated that teachers believe that when they display positive attitudes towards parental involvement, they are likely to engage in activities that promote parents' participation in learner's education. Abdullah, Seede, Alzaidiyeen, Al-Shabat, Alzeydeen, and Al-Awabdeh (2011) found similar results. They argued that teachers' positive attitudes on parental involvement are of great importance as they can be considered a good indicator to determine the quality of education where parents' involvement is encouraged. In addition, the majority of the teachers in Dor's (2012) study share positive feelings on parents' participation in learner's education and argued that parental involvement can enhance the quality of education. This is in parallel with the work of Foster and Loven (1992) who found that the majority of teachers expressed that parental involvement is necessary for learners to perform well in their education. Congruent with the results of the current study, there is no doubt that the findings in these studies discussed above indicate that teachers seem to support that parents are likely to be involved in their children's education when teachers have positive attitudes towards parental involvement.

Moreover, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) expressed that teachers' positive attitudes towards parental involvement are very influential in parents' decisions about their involvement in children's education. For Epstein and Dauber (1991), teachers with more positive opinions about parental involvement place more importance than other teachers on such practices as

communicating with parents about school programs, providing parents with both good and bad reports about learners' progress and holding conferences with all learners' parents. Teachers with more positive opinions on parental involvement also correlate with more success in involving "hard-to-reach" parents, including less educated parents, parents of older learners, working parents, parents new to the school, single parents, and other adults with whom the learner lives with (Abdullah et al, 2011). Thus teachers' willingness to display positive attitudes towards parental involvement may be partly due to their awareness that their attitudes improve their engagement with parents for the betterment of the learner's achievement.

Along with the positive attitudes, the findings of the study have shown that teachers expressed negative attitudes towards parental involvement as well. Some participants in the study have indicated that some teachers do not take the involvement of parents in learner's education serious. For these participants, such teachers' negative attitudes towards parental involvement result in many parents disengaging themselves from school matters. When teachers show little or no interest in parental involvement, uninvolved parents hold a belief that teachers require them to limit their involvement and thus shift their responsibilities to teachers. The same results were found in Willis' (2013) study and posited that in the real world there are teachers who fear parental involvement activities and can see little benefit from it. Some of the teachers interviewed in Dor and Rucker-Naidu (2012) study shared their hesitations and their tendency to be cautious while interacting with parents. These teachers criticised parents who questioned the teachers' authority and professionalism. In addition, the teachers expressed their frustration with parents who do not trust the teachers' judgement, leading to inappropriate contemptuous behaviour towards teachers. Dor and Rucker-Naidu (2012) were of the opinion that such reactions cause tension and insecure feelings among the teachers in working with parents.

Dornbusch and Ritter (1998) concurred that teachers in their study reported little contact with parents and did not prefer more contact with their learners' parents due to the negative perceptions teachers have on parental involvement.

The teachers in these two studies discussed above appear to be candid about their frustration with working with parents. Instead of examining the differences and challenges noticed between the two stakeholders, these teachers tend to dismiss poor teacher-parent relation as by-product of personality incompatibilities (Lightfoot, 1978). Similarly, the teachers in the present study also highlighted their dissatisfaction with involvement of parents in school matters. Participants indicated that parents are ignorant and do not seem to understand their role in their children's education. Contrary to the findings of Dor and Rucker-Naidu (2012) and Dombush and Ritter's (1998) studies, teachers under study did not indicate any reluctance to engage parents in their children's education as they have shown their efforts in trying to involve these parents. It should be noted that the focus on negative teacher-parent interaction serves to undermine hope that school-family relations will improve.

It is clear that such negative attitudes illuminated above can negatively affect the teacher-parent relationship. Although it was indicated that some teachers in the schools under study did not know how to form good relationships with parents, other authors such as Hammack, Foote, Garretson, and Thompson (2012) viewed teachers as possessing professional responsibility to eliminate negative opinions, in an effort to foster healthy relationships between the two parties. For that sake, Baum and Swick (2008) advised teachers to abandon their personal beliefs and biases that hinder them to connect with parents in a productive manner. Hammack et al. (2012) acknowledged that teachers may lack the necessary skills needed to build successful relationship with parents. However, other studies have shown that teachers are not the only ones who lack

necessary relationship building skills. Reece, Staudt, and Ogle (2013) viewed parents as lacking the key relationship building skills, thereby creating a boundary to form proper relationships with the schools. Due to teachers' professional responsibility to mentor teacher-parent relationships, Reece et al (2013) argued that there is a need for teachers to act as facilitators in their attempt to build healthy relationships with parents. Researchers have stressed the need for both teachers and parents to receive training that may increase their relationship building skills. Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) agreed that training for teachers is necessary to strengthen a home-school connection, while Reece et al. (2013) admitted that a training that could enable parents to effectively develop skills that may increase their relationship building with the schools is essential.

### **5.3 School policy on parental involvement**

According to SASSA 84 of 1996, parents have a legal obligation to ensure that learners attend school from the first day at school until the last day of the learner's schooling years. This is to say that the South African National Education Policy (SANEP) has increased the participation of parents whereby they (parents) are being asked to work closely with teachers. With this shift, Epstein (1992) argued that a formal policy on parental involvement together with the school and teacher practices seem to be the strongest predictors of parents' participation in the school as well as at home. While the findings of the study indicated that school B has a written policy on parental involvement, there was no indication to suggest that school A has a defined parental involvement policy which could determine the strategies for involving parents. The primary motivation for parents to become involved in the learner's education appears to be a belief that is associated with the kind of policy the school employs. On this basis, Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention (CDCP, 2013) revealed that the school must sustain parental engagement by addressing a variety of activities needed to involve parents. According to CDCP (2013), the school needs to use these activities in consultation with parents. The policy on parental involvement provides a system framework for the development of effective home-school partnerships and encouragement of parent participation in schools and students' learning (Thompson, 2001).

The participants under study indicated that majority of parents are not involved in their children's education. Consistent with the finding in this study, other studies have shown that alack of clear policy on parental involvement points out to the absence of collaboration between the school and the home. For instance, Singh, Mbokazi and Msila (2004) highlighted that teachers believe parents are not doing their share of the work as expected due to lack of supporting programmes necessary to involving parents in their children's education. It should be noted that teachers in the study have shown their need to reach out to the parents despite written policy that guides them. Their failure to involve parents could be the result of what Swap (1993) spoke about when he argued that teachers' attempt to working with parents is not depended on their own individual inclination but usually based on laid down policy. For a successful partnership with parents, the schools must therefore provide clear guidelines on how teachers can involve parents,

In spite of the drawbacks highlighted in the schools regarding the policy on parental involvement, Okeke (2014) argued that no law exists in the South African context that holds parents accountable for their children's education. This evidence highlighted the existing deficiency on the national policy on parental involvement in South Africa. With this kind of policy, teachers in Okeke's (2014) study expressed that there is little influence for parents'

participation. The teachers interviewed in this study confirmed the need for a more structured guideline on effective parental involvement in schools to direct parents' interest in helping their children with learning activities. These teachers also expressed that the policy must be communicated with parents and reviewed in school meetings. According to a document by CCSSO (2006), such an approach would ensure that school heads are mandated to committing explicitly to parental involvement with a written policy. Okeke (2014) felt that the involvement of parents in education matters is capable of strengthening the home-school relationship. However, he argued that such can only be possible if parents themselves feel their family's interests are clearly accentuated within such a policy framework whereby the NEP is equally explicit on what school principals, teachers as well as parents are required to do both within and outside the schools about the children's learning.

#### **5.4 Mode of communication**

Although Epstein (1995) described communication with parents as one of the six major types of parental involvement practices critical to establishing strong working relationships between teachers and parents, unfortunately Hradecky (1994) found that a number of teachers have not received training specifically on how they need to communicate effectively with parents. The above claim was also a finding in the current study wherein teachers revealed that they have not been trained in the skills they require to engage and communicate with parents. As such, Caspse (2003) admitted that communication skills for teachers must be incorporated in teacher's preparation and professional development programs. The teachers in the study outlined a range of communication strategies that they employ in a hope to maximise partnership with parents.

They argued that communication between parents and teachers occurs through a variety of sources including written and verbal means of communication. These avenues will be discussed below in relation to the literature reviewed. Graham-Clay (2009) advised teachers to actively incorporate both strategies to maximise sharing information with parents.

- **Written communication**

Although the participants in the study confirmed that written communication in their respective schools is not as effective as expected, Williams and Cartledge (1997) viewed written communication as the most effective and efficient way that provides valuable ongoing correspondence between home and school. In addition, Graham-Clay (2009) considered written communication as a permanent product that requires careful consideration regarding format and content, so that parents could be able to read and understand the message that which is sent to them. The results of the current study revealed that the two schools share written information with parents through letters, homework books as well as messaging services. Despite that teachers under study experienced disappointment when trying to communicate with parents through letters, they viewed sending letters to home as important. In light of this, Graham-Clay (2009) noted that letters are commonly used by the schools to convey written information with the parents. For Aronson (1995), consistent application of several specific strategies can make school letters a more effective communication tool. With this, Aronson (1995) maintained that teachers should incorporate same colour, quality, and paper size for all letters to create a communication set. These strategies could provide helpful information for the schools under study as they strive to communicate with parents using letters.

Although the teachers under study viewed homework books as the least effective way of communicating with parents, literature has shown that this kind of method is another commonly used written communication technique. Davern (2004) argued that many teachers make use of homework communication books to share information with parents, particularly for children who experience learning difficulties. This form of communication has been proven to construct an ongoing documentation of problem-solving and child progress that promotes congruent educational decision-making and coordinates programming efforts (Stanley, Beamish, & Bryer, 2005). Williams and Cartledge (1997) proposed strategies that teachers can employ to enhance the effectiveness of communication through homework books. Williams and Cartledge (1997) reminded teachers to clearly establish what information will be communicated, by whom and how often. They further stated that teachers should be sensitive to a balance of both good and bad news contained in the message. Lastly, Williams and Cartledge (1997) said that teachers should refrain from using educational jargon. These strategies could have been missing in the case of the two schools under study as they reported less communication through this mode.

Salend, Duhaney, Anderson and Gottschalk (2004) argued that the use of technology-based communication between schools and homes is increasingly being suggested for brief and urgent communication. In line with Salend et al. (2004), Palts and Kalmus (2015) viewed the digitisation and the fast development of the internet as factors that increase the importance of digital channels such as e-mail, instant and text messages, and social networking sites and other online platforms in the communication between parents and teachers. Along these, Palts and Kalmus (2015) acknowledged that traditional channels such as filling the diary, phone calls and personal conversations continue to be used to a large extent. School B embraces technology through the use of messaging services as a means to communicate with parents. The school send

messages to parents through texts and at the same time parents are welcome to respond with a message of their own. The participants also reported that the schools make use of phone calls to communicate with parents. Shambare (2014) described in his study on instant messaging services that such means of communication is simple, cost-effective and a user-friendly way to communicate. Hence, teachers in school B rated this mode of communication as most effective and convenient.

In addition, Ramirez (2001) posited that integrating technology can help schools to communicate quickly with parents. The participants in the study reported that communicating with parents through technology-based methods has been helpful because they are able to engage with parents even when they are away and unable to meet personally with the teachers. The development of communication through technology may be advantageous but it also comes with disadvantages. Olmstead (2013) argued that usage of technology in home-school communication may hinder interpersonal communication and information exchange. As a result, this type of communication may damage the relationship between the school and the home (Lee, Leung, Lo, Xiong & Wu, 2011). The findings also revealed that parents and the schools under study rely mostly on telephone calls and messaging to communicate, thereby causing a hindrance to face-to-face communication.

- **Verbal communication**

Graham-Clay (2009) argued that verbal communication occurs when parents and teachers have a dialogue together. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2004), effective dialogue develops out of a mutuality of concern, a growing trust as well as an appreciation of contrasting perspectives. The means of verbal communication outlined by teachers in chapter 4 included telephone calls, parents' meetings and parents' visits to school. The responsibility lies with the teacher to strive to make these interactions as productive as possible (Graham-Clay, 2009). The findings of the study revealed that through a telephone call, a teacher contacts parents to particularly share his or her concerns about the learners, which has been found to be a source of significant tension for both parents and teachers. In her study, Gustafson (1998) revealed that she calls parents of each learner in her class monthly to either discuss concerns or to answer specific questions raised. Gustafson (1998) expressed that such contacts with parents do not only improve learner's academic performance but also provide valuable information about the lives of learners outside school premises.

Another popular verbal communication strategy that the schools employ is the parent-teacher meetings. Minke and Anderson (2003) agreed that successful partnership between parents and teachers could be formed during their meetings when they both use this opportunity effectively. However, the same authors admitted that the meetings could be anxiety provoking to both parents and teachers, and this could explain why teachers in the study reported low attendance rate during parents' meetings. The participants highlighted that most parents especially those whose learners are underperforming or have behavioural difficulties at school are reluctant to attend school meetings. To eradicate this matter, Metcalf (2001) suggested that teachers could construct an opportunity to also discuss what is working with the learner instead of viewing the

meeting as a reporting session for what is not going well with the learner. By so doing, the teacher-parent conversation would be based on a full discussion of the learner including both strengths and weaknesses (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004). In addition, for an effective parent-teacher meeting, Evans (2004) said that teachers need to possess important interpersonal skills. These include that teachers communicate a genuine caring for people, being able to build rapport, conveying interest and empathy, and reflecting and using clarifying statements to ensure an accurate understanding of parental views. The teachers in the schools under study can also employ these skills to improve their meetings with parents.

The findings of the study indicated that teachers welcome visits from parents at any time of the schools hours. The participants encouraged parents to visit the school whenever they have concerns to be raised. Epstein (1995) postulated that home-to-school communication, where parents visit the school to discuss their children's school life often correlates with positive child outcomes. Although majority of parents seldom visit the school and hardly initiate contact with the schools, the teachers interviewed supported the idea of parents paying visits to the school to talk with the teachers. Like the participants in this study, Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004a) argued this point that home-to-school communication, where parents visit the school is one of the most important form of parents' participation that is poorly implemented as parents continue to neglect this opportunity. It should be noted that there is no indication in this study to suggest that teachers welcome visits from parents whose children are without problems. This finding could explain what Lemmer and Van Wyk's (2004a) study suggested that the school's emphasis on parents' visits to schools is mostly when there is a problem with a learner. Clearly, parents' visits to schools are only about obtaining parents' support in dealing with problematic learners.

## **5.5 Barriers to parental involvement**

According to the findings related to the barriers of parental involvement, the teachers under study highlighted four factors that can influence parents' participation, and these factors will be discussed below in relation to the literature reviewed.

- **Elderly-headed households**

It was found in the current study that the number of learners staying with grandparents is growing, which resulted in many learners taken care of by their grandparents. According to some participants, grandparents do not possess the necessary skills needed to be involved in education. They argued that grandparents are experiencing physiological changes that are associated with old age and this affects their involvement in the learner's education. This growing number is not unusual as previous studies have revealed similar results. Reynolds, Wright and Beale (2003) viewed the structure of families as changing, resulting in children growing up in families with both parents working, blended families, single parent families, multigenerational families and families headed by grandparents. Danielsbacka and Tanskanen (2012) found that grandparents have a positive influence on grandchildren's well-being in all these types of family structures. In addition to grandparents' roles within the family structure, Eliason and Jenkins (2014) argued that their engagement with schools has been documented as influential. These finding related to grandparents' positive influence in the school echo the findings revealed by some teachers in the current study who believe that grandparents have a positive role to play in their children's learning.

Although there appears to be a great emphasis on the issue of involving grandparents in the schools, some teachers in the current study appeared to have lost confidence in the grandparents' ability to engage in school work. These teachers do not involve grandparents because they view grandparents as illiterate and therefore unable to help with school activities. The latter indicated that teachers' view of grandparents can affect how teachers find means to involve grandparents in education matters. To support this, Eliason and Jenkins (2014) determined that teachers' efforts to involve grandparents in the education of their own grandchildren are limited. Nevertheless, the findings of the current study have shown that grandparents can assist learners by creating a home environment conducive to learning, listen to learners as they read, and also making sure that learners have bath and eaten. The review of literature has also demonstrated that there are many kinds of activities that grandparents can participate in schools. According to Strom and Strom (1995), grandparents can contribute to children's learning by listening to children read, provide supervision at recess or lunch, and review academic content with learners. This suggests that grandparents are better prepared to support the learning of their grandchildren when schools make an effort to facilitate their involvement in the educational process, and also considering that grandparents are the only available caregivers to the learners while parents are away.

- **Parents' working conditions**

Another barrier that teachers in this study reported included parents' working conditions as this has been found to limit parents' involvement in their children's education. The results showed that parents spend most of their time at work, and as the result, they fail to commit to their

children's education. Dwyer and Hecht (1992) emphasised that parents who report to have no time to dedicate to being involved with their children's education often work many hours at work, and otherwise unavailable when the children are. Other researchers found similar results regarding this matter. Funkhouser and Gonzales (1997) stressed that time has become a major deterrent to parental involvement due to parents' work schedules and other commitment that hinder their availability to engage in the learners' education.

The above rationale underlines the inability of some parents to attend scheduled meetings at school as well as other school related functions. The teachers in the study reported that the schools personnel only hold meetings twice a year and many parents miss out on the opportunity to attend. In order to reach these parents, Funkhouser and Gonzales (1997) suggested that the schools must offer meetings more often or on weekends to accommodate parents who have little time. If this fails, Dwyer and Hecht (1992) said that the school must look into providing extra educational support for the learners. Some teachers in the current study also considered doing in class the work that was initially planned to be done at home to accommodate learners with limited support from home.

The teachers in the study also felt that parents' work is necessary as it included positive aspects in it. These teachers expressed that parents' work is important because they (parents) are making contribution towards learners' living costs. Researchers have found that parents' work has a large impact on every aspect of the child's life, including participation in the child's education. According to Bauer and Barnett (2001), parents with less paying jobs experience many obstacles, including time constraints due to work schedule and financial difficulties, and all these affect their ability to participate in learners' education. Unlike these parents, parents with higher SES backgrounds generally have more flexibility in their schedules that allow maximum participation

in their children's education since they do not have additional daily stressors that the lower SES parents experience (Fagbeminiyi, 2011). Knowing that diversity exists among the parents' participation in education due to their working conditions, it can be assumed that teachers should not have the same expectations from various groups of parents.

- **Parents' educational background**

The participants under study have shown that parents' educational background is one of the contributing factors to the level of parental involvement. They described that parents' educational level plays an important role in the amount of parents' participation. The results of this study have proved that parental involvement can be affected by parents' negative school experience. It was found in this study that parents with low educational status are less likely to be involved in their children's education. Consistent with this finding, Lee and Bowen (2006) found in their study that parents with higher college degree have shown considerably more attendance in the school activities, talk more often about educational issues with their children, and have high expectations in their children's education than parents with lower educational background. The problem with parents with low levels, as noted by the teachers in the present study, is that they cannot assist learners with school related issues due to their own awareness of their limited knowledge in that regard. Jafarov (2015) concurred that parents whose educational levels are low tend to be less involved as they lack self-confidence to engage with school staff as well as helping learners with school work.

Interestingly, poor involvement has not been found in parents with low educational levels only but also in parents of higher educational background. The current study has shown that parents

with higher educational status tend to work in cities where employment opportunities exist, and as the result they fail to engage in their children's learning due to lack of time. Also Baeck (2010) discovered that parents with university degrees point out to lack of time as the main reason for not getting involved. However, other studies disagreed with Baeck's (2010) finding. It has been found that the higher the parent's educational level, the better the involvement in learner's education (Khan, Iqbal, & Saima, 2015). These authors stressed that learners whose parents possess higher educational qualifications tend to have better academic achievement because their parents are more involved in their learning. Nevertheless, literature indicated that parents with lower educational attainment have something to offer in their children's education. Pena's (2000) study has shown that these parents volunteer more often in various activities in schools than parents with higher educational achievement. Thus, this finding shows that Pena (2000), just like some teachers in this study, is of the opinion that parents' participation in their children's education is not dependent on their educational levels.

- **Language of instruction at school**

The results of the study have indicated that the parents of the learners are all Black Africans, and they speak languages other than English at home, which is considered to be one of the most common barriers that prevent effective partnership between parents and teachers. It was found in the study that most teachers prefer to communicate with parents in English, which in turn affect their partnership because most parents have limited capacity to engage in English. Just as Denessen, Baker, and Gierveld (2007) who argued that language problem is the most important reason for low levels of parental involvement, this study has shown that many parents with

limited English skills prefer to be less involved than parents who can speak English well. Thus, parental involvement seems to be influenced by parents' ability to engage in English. In addition, Colombo (2006) admitted that many parents are interested in helping their children to succeed in school; however, their limited English skills often prevent them from doing so. This information is also true for the current study as participants indicated that parents may be willing to be part of their children's learning but may be less comfortable at their ability to help their children with school work. All these reasons outlined above directly affect parental involvement as well as indirectly affect learner achievement negatively (Ozturk, 2013).

It is worth noting that some teachers in this study did not find language as a factor contributing to parents' failing to participate in school activities. These teachers argued that the school encourage parents to indicate when they face challenges to communicate with teachers due to language barrier. According to these teachers, parents often feel frustrated when they struggle to communicate with teachers. As a result, these parents do not prefer to be in contact with the teachers at all.

For effective teacher-parent communication, the participants in the current study suggested that teachers must refrain from using English when communicating with parents. Additionally, literature has shown that there are many ways in which non-English speaking parents can be involved. Varela (2008) pointed out that the school must develop a community of teachers who understand the value of multiculturalism and are trained to face the challenges and rewards emerge from teaching learners who come from different racial groups. Denessen et al (2007) command teachers to openly embrace the needs of parents by involving them in the learners' educational process without consideration of any socio-linguistic and socio-cultural differences. However, Varela (2008) stated that many teachers have not received enough training to engage

different groups of parents. Therefore, a teacher training program might be needed for the improvement of teachers' competence to communicate with various parents.

## **5.6 The application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory in the selected schools**

By definition, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory states that children function within multiple systems and these systems are interconnected and influence the functioning and behaviour of these children (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Literature has shown that the home and the school are the prominent micro-systems in a child's life whereby events in one micro-system affect the other micro-system, influencing interactions in these systems. Therefore, understanding a child's development and behaviour requires understanding of all these systems in a child's life. It can be said without question that the meso-system integrating the home and the school is important because the child travels daily between home and school, experiencing the cultural values, norms, beliefs, and expectations in each micro-system. Therefore, this model supports that families and schools influence each other and, together, have a profound impact on the child's development.

One aspect of the ecological framework has a particular utility for enhancing parental involvement. Christenson (1995) argued that this model posits a shared responsibility between parents and teachers for children's academic and behavioural success. What seems to be lacking in the schools under study is that the roles that parents and teachers are expected to play in the learners' education are not well communicated. Thus, there is a need that the schools and families communicate the beliefs and information they have about each other and their motivation to interface with one another to avoid confusion of roles. Clarification of roles is

necessary because failure to do so can result in conflict between the two parties which may disrupt the functioning of the meso-system, and therefore negatively affect the child's overall functioning and performance at school.

The children in the schools under study will benefit if both parents and teachers have knowledge that is relevant to enhance children's learning. It is vital that the schools develop and evaluate ways in which the children's learning could be enhanced by means of exchanging knowledge between teachers and parents. In this case, parents and teachers have to come together and share their knowledge about the learners, since they know learners from different worlds. Teachers know learners from the formal schooling point of view, while parents know them from outside the school. Although both parents and teachers know much about different aspects of these children's learning, the results have shown that these stakeholders' knowledge tends to be not well-shared. Thus, it would be useful for both parents and teachers to pool their knowledge about children so that they both know what is expected.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to discuss in relation to literature the findings raised in the study regarding teachers' perceptions on parental involvement and their expectations thereof. It was realised that teachers value the importance of parental involvement in learners' education as it is believed to enhance learning experience. Despite this benefit, many parents are believed to continue to shift their responsibilities to teachers. However, literature has shown that teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement and their expectations thereof can determine how well parents can agree to involve in school matters. In addition, the school policy on parental

involvement is necessary as it guides teachers in their efforts to involve parents. To strengthen the relationship between the parent and the teacher, communication is key so that parents are informed of the roles they are supposed to play in their children's education. Lastly, although parental involvement has gained valuable support in children's learning, there seem to be factors that contribute to poor parental involvement. Literature has shown that these factors need to be acknowledged and addressed for parental involvement to have desired effect. The chapter concluded by discussing how the theoretical framework underpinning the study can be applied in the current study.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter, the researcher outlines the conclusion by summarising the findings of the study presented and analysed in chapter 4, and later discussed in relation to the literature in chapter 5. The background to the study was that parental involvement is essential to learner's performance. Whilst teachers expect parents to be involved in their children's education, it is not clear how they expect parents to be involved. Said differently, what teachers want parents to do in order to assist their children in their education is not well researched. It was against this background that this study was conducted in order to engage teachers with the question of how they would like parents to partake in learners' education so that learners' performance could be improved.

The primary aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of the six teachers on parental involvement. These teachers' perceptions were presented whereby four major themes emerged as indicated in chapter 4. The summary of findings that inferred from the themes will be presented in this final chapter of the study. The recommendations based on how the schools can improve parental involvement are presented in this chapter together with the recommendations for future research. The recommendations provided can assist the schools to understand and identify the gaps in their efforts to involve parents in children's education so that necessary remedial actions to strengthen parents' participation in the schools could be taken. Other schools in similar contexts can also consider and follow the recommendations provided in this study.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The following are the inferences made regarding the themes presented in chapter 4.

### **6.2.1 Teachers' perceptions on parental involvement**

The participants in the study communicated various perceptions they have on parental involvement. They regarded parental involvement as crucial to children's learning. Their views suggested that parental involvement can have a positive influence on learner's academic achievement. Evidence from the study has proved that learners of involved parents tend to achieve better marks at school as they see their parents show interest in their learning when compared with learners whose parents are not involved. Upon seeing the impact that parent's participation has on children's education, participants in the study supported the idea of collaboration between the schools and families. The participants revealed that learners develop greater appreciation of education whenever parents and teachers work together. The results have shown that learners are motivated to learn as they notice that their parents and teachers work as a team. However, the results indicated that this partnership can only be executed well when these two parties (parents and teachers) are willing to work in collaboration.

Other findings have shown that participants have negative perceptions on parental involvement in the two selected schools. According to the results, some parents continue to disconnect themselves from their children's education. The participants were of the opinion that parents' lack of knowledge of the roles they are required to play in their children's education resulted in lower number of parents participating in learner's education. For these participants, it is

important for parents to realise their roles in their children's education to avoid shifting full responsibility to teachers. The participants were dissatisfied with the way parents in their schools have shifted their roles to them as this has resulted in extra workload in the case of the teachers. The participants identified two factors that were believed to be influential to the current state of parental involvement in the two schools, including teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement and their expectations thereof. According to them, it is crucial for teachers to display positive attitudes towards parental involvement, and also increase their knowledge of their expectations on parents' participation because these two factors are believed to be congruent to how the schools involve parents.

### **6.2.2 School policy on parental involvement**

The participants expressed their feelings regarding the school policy on parental involvement in their respective schools. According to the participants, it is necessary that the schools have a written policy that guides their practices concerned with effective parental involvement. Findings have shown that school A has no written policy that they refer to, whereas school B has it. Participants highlighted that it becomes challenging to apply appropriate measures to involve parents if the school has no written policy that guides such actions and practices. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of school policy on parents' participation in learner's education especially in the case of school A. The participants argued that there should be a school policy on parental involvement that is communicated and reviewed with parents to make sure that the proposed practices and actions are suitable and practical for parents. Although participants were confident in their skills to involve parents in education which they acquired through reading and

also in teachers' workshop they attended, they were all in agreement that a school policy on parental involvement is necessary.

### **6.2.3 Mode of communication**

The findings of the study indicated that communication between the schools and families is important so that parents can stay updated on their children's overall performance and behaviour at school. It was found in the study that the exchange of information between parents and teachers does not only benefit parents but also teachers as they get to know how the learners conduct themselves outside the schools premises. The findings have also shown that learners benefit too when they see their parents and teachers stay in touch. The learners know that how they conduct themselves at school parents will know about it and vice versa. Participants discussed various methods the schools employ in their attempt to keep in touch with parents. These methods included both written and verbal modes of communication.

In terms of written communication, the results have shown that the schools make use of letters and homework books as a means to interact with parents. In addition, school B has implemented a messaging system whereby they send text messages to parents. The results indicated that teachers use letters for any announcement they may want parents to be aware of. Also they require parents to sign on the homework books at the end of each homework given to learners as a way to get parents to be informed about their children's academic progress. Participants exposed that majority of parents hardly reply to letters nor do they sign the homework books, proving to teachers that many parents are disinterested in their children's education. However, it was found in the study that sometimes parents may be interested to be involved with their

children's learning but learners themselves can hinder this process. The participants revealed that many learners who are underperforming or experiencing behavioural problems at school mostly do not send letters home or show their parents homework books because they fear that they will get into trouble with their parents.

The findings have shown that the schools also communicate with parents in the form of verbal communication as well. The participants indicated that they gather annual meetings with parents which are inaugurated by the SGB wherein there is parents' component in it. According to the results, the purpose of the meetings was to address all the concerns that both parents and teachers might have regarding the learners. It was found that majority of parents whose children are not doing well in school do not attend school meetings because they fear to discuss their troublesome children in front of other parents. As a result, the participants said that teachers invite such parents individually. In addition, the schools expect parents to visit teachers even when they are not invited whenever they have concerns to raise. However, the findings indicated that parents rarely take that initiative. Lastly, the results showed that the schools contact parents telephonically especially in such cases where parents are away from home and unable to attend meetings. The findings of the study have shown that all these methods both verbal and written highlighted above can enhance parental involvement.

#### **6.2.4 Barriers to parental involvement**

The participants identified four barriers as contributing factors to poor parental involvement. Firstly, they highlighted that many of their learners stay with grandparents as their parents are away due to employment. According to the findings, the level of parents' participation in

education continues to decline as these grandparents are considered illiterate, resulting in their inability to engage in school matters. Despite being illiterate, the results have shown that these grandparents are believed to be going through physiological changes associated with old age, and therefore cannot cope with the learners. The participants in the current study showed discrepancy in how they view the importance of grandparents in learners' education. While some believed that grandparents have no role to play in learners' education, others indicated that grandparents can offer support to the learning of their grandchildren by shaping the learners' mindset and their motivation to learn, as well as encouraging positive attitudes in the learners' education.

Other findings revealed that parents' working conditions can affect how parents avail themselves in their children's education. The results have indicated that most parents work long hours, and when they get home they are already tired from work, and no time is left for them to get involved in school matters such as helping the learners with homework or attend parents' meetings. Although the findings suggested that participants were disappointed with working parents who do not find time to be involved in the learning of their children, they also admitted that parents' employment was also important to fulfil learners' financial needs. The results showed that both parents' participation in learners' education and parents' employment were equally important in learners' lives. However, the findings revealed that parents struggled to manage the two as most of them were reported to have failed to engage in their children's education.

Thirdly, the findings confirmed that parents' limited educational experience amount to a serious barrier to parental involvement. It was revealed that most teachers lack confidence in parents with less school experience. According to the findings, when teachers do not show interest in partnering with such parents, these parents tend to shift their responsibilities to the schools as they believe that teachers want them to limit their involvement. Although literature reviewed

indicated that parents with high educational status are more likely to be involved in their children's education than parents of lower school experience, the results of the current study have shown that parents need not to be educated in order to contribute to children's education.

Lastly, the language of instruction at school, English, was also found to be a contributing factor to poor parental involvement. The findings reflected that some teachers use English to communicate with parents, and as a result many parents are reluctant to engage with teachers due to their limited capacity to understand English. However, other findings suggested that teachers are flexible to use a language that which parents are comfortable with, indicating that efforts can always be made to accommodate all parents.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The following are the proposed recommendations that the schools under study can employ to mitigate the challenges they are currently facing regarding parental involvement.

#### **6.3.1 All responsible adults becoming involved in learner's education**

The teachers under study revealed their ideal ways in which they expect parents to get involved in the learners' education. These teachers expect parents and other responsible adults in the learners' lives to assist the learners with home work. In cases where the adults cannot assist with homework due to lack of understanding of school work, the teachers expect these adults to encourage learners to perform well at school as well as providing a home environment conducive to learning. The teachers demonstrated a clear understanding of the expectations they have on

parents, which can serve as a starting point to effective parental involvement. My wish is to see all responsible adults in the learners' lives to take part in assisting the learners to obtain higher grades. For this wish to come to pass, I recommend that teachers communicate their expectations on parents' participation with these adults. It is also important for teachers to ensure that their expectations are applicable to these adults.

### **6.3.2 Constant communication between parents and teachers**

The expectations that teachers have on parents can only have desired effect if there is a constant communication between parents and teachers because it is only through communication wherein these expectations can be explained and understood. The results revealed various methods to communicate with parents and most of these methods were considered ineffective. Parents may not have the knowledge on how important communicating with teachers is. However, the literature reviewed in this study indicated that teachers have a professional obligation to create effective communication with the learners' parents. I therefore suggest that teachers strive to maintain constant communication with parents as this is the way in which parents would be aware of their responsibilities in their children's education.

### **6.3.3 Managing the barriers to parental involvement**

The teachers in the study highlighted various barriers that could contribute to poor parental involvement including elderly-headed households, parents' working conditions, parents' educational level and language of instruction at school. All these factors are valid, and I

recommend that the schools acknowledge and address these issues so that measures could be taken to overcome them. By so doing, the schools would have successful partnership with parents if they succeed in identifying the potential barriers to parental involvement highlighted above.

#### **6.3.4 Training for teachers on parental involvement**

It was found in the study that teachers have not received formal training on how to involve parents in learners' education. It is therefore recommended that the Department of Education make it a requirement for tertiary institutions to include a module on parental involvement for all pre-service teachers. The department must also ensure that in-service teachers receive mandatory workshops regarding parental involvement so as to equip teachers with ways they can engage with parents. However, the policy makers should take into cognisance the fact that South Africa is a diverse country, and thus the policies made should be sensitive to the context in which these policies will be practiced.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research**

The study has given valuable insight into teachers' perceptions on parental involvement. However, there were limitations that were identified in the study that require further research. Firstly, the study was conducted in a rural area. It may be possible that the kind of parental involvement displayed by the parents in this area is different to that of parents in urban areas. Various factors may explain this discrepancy such as that the level of illiteracy among rural

parents may be relatively higher than that of the parents in urban areas. It is recommended that further studies be conducted that focus on urban areas.

Secondly, the study is limited to one region of the country, which is Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga province. There may be a possibility that the teachers in other regions of the country have different views on their perceptions of parental involvement. As such, further research in other regions of the country is necessary.

Thirdly, the parents of the learners in this study are all Black Africans. It is possible that these parents may understand their role in learners' education in a different way from that of other population groups. This is a limitation that warrants further explorations be done with other population groups.

Lastly, the study was conducted with primary school teachers. It could be possible that similar studies conducted with secondary school teachers may produce different findings. Teachers in secondary schools may expect a different kind of parental involvement that may vary from that displayed by the primary school teachers, since learners in secondary schools do not usually interact with teachers the same way primary school learners do. Therefore, a study that concentrates on the perceptions of secondary schools teachers is recommended.

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03 July 2017

**Ms Tumelo Remember Mathebula (215069692)**  
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology  
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Mathebula,

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0906/017M**

**Project title: Teacher expectations of parental involvement in learner education: Perceptions of primary school teachers**

**Approval Notification – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received on 27 June 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Dr Shrinuka Singh (Chair)**

/ms

Supervisor: Dr Thandi Sylvia Magojo and Nombekhaya Mtwenlulu  
Co Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn  
Co School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli

---

**Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**

**Dr Shrinuka Singh (Chair)**

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Interview protocol for teachers**

1. Tell me about your teaching background: What grade(s) are you teaching, which subjects and when did you start teaching?
2. Let's talk about the work of the learners in the classroom, how has been your experience so far? Please elaborate.
3. Roughly, how often do you give you give your learners homework on a weekly basis? Please specify?
4. Do all the learners manage to do their homework? If not, why is that so?
5. Are you aware of any school policy relating to parental involvement? If so, what does it suggest?
6. Is the school policy on parental involvement helpful to both parents and teachers? How so?
7. How is this policy communicated to both parents and teachers?
8. How do parents of the pupils you teach involve themselves in their children's education?
9. Do you communicate what you want parents to do in their involvement in their children's education? And how do you communicate this?
10. What have been the responses from parents with regard to their involvement in their children's education?
11. How would you advice parents on their involvement in their children's education?

12. What exactly do you expect parents to do by way of involving themselves in their children's education?

13. Do you think your expectations relating to parental involvement are congruent with those of the parents? Please explain.

14. Do you have parents who are involved in their children's education? If so, what is your experience with those parents and how do you perceive their involvement?

15. In the context of your experience, kindly identify barriers to parental involvement in their children's education?

16. How can these challenges be managed or addressed at the school level?

## **Appendix B: Information sheet (interview request)**

Dear Participant

My name is Tumelo Remember Mathebula, and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my research is "Teacher expectations of parental involvement in learner education: Perceptions of primary school teachers. The aim of the study is to ascertain teacher expectations of parental involvement in learner education.

You are requested to take part in this study. Kindly note that participation in this study is completely voluntary and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. However, all of your responses will be kept confidential. No information that could identify you will be included in the research report or in any publication that follows. You may choose not to answer any questions you would prefer not to (there will be no penalty), and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point (there will be no penalty). If you choose to partake in the study, please complete the attached consent form. If requested, feedback will be provided on completion of the project. Feedback will take the form of one page summary of the study and its results.

Kindly note the following:

- It will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to conduct the interview
- All data collected will be stored in secure storage and will be destroyed via shredding after five years.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved

- If you are willing to be interviewed, please note that the interview will be recorded by the means of audio equipment, and also note taking.

For any further information, feel free to contact the researcher's supervisor of the study Dr Thandi Magojo and/or co-supervisor Ms Ntombekhaya Mtwentula. If you have any queries about the rights of research participants, please contact Ms. Phumelele Ximba in the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethic Office.

Contact Details:

Dr Thandi Magojo

Ms.Ntombekhaya Mtwentula

Ms. Phumelele Ximba

Supervisor

Co-supervisor

Ethics Officer

Tel: 031 260 3509

Tel: 031 2601087

Tel: 031 260 3587

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated

Sincerely

Ms Tumelo. R Mathebula

Email: [tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com](mailto:tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com)

Cell: 073 136 1070

**Appendix C: Informed consent form**

**TITTLE:** Teacher expectations of parental involvement in learner education: Perceptions of primary school teachers.

I..... (Full names of participant)hereby consent to participate in this study as indicated in the information sheet. Please tick the appropriate box.

Agree to participate

Do not agree to participate

**DECLARARATION**

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I so desire and that the information that I provide will be anonymous, confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Name of participant:.....

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Regards

Ms. Tumelo Mathebula

Researcher

E-mail: [tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com](mailto:tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com)

Cell: 073 136 1070

**Appendix D: Consent to audio recording & note taking**

**TITLE:** Teacher expectations of parental involvement in learner education: Perceptions of primary school teachers.

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby consent to the interview being recorded by the means of audio equipment and also note taking as indicated in the information sheet. Please tick the appropriate box.

Agree to participate

Do not agree to participate

**DECLARARATION**

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I so desire and that the information that I provide will be anonymous, confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Name of participant:.....

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Warm Regards

Ms. Tumelo Mathebula

Researcher

E-mail: [tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com](mailto:tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com)

Cell: 073 136 1070

## **Appendix E: Sample letter to the senior district manager**

The Senior District Manager

Mpumalanga Department of Education, Bohlabela District

Private bag x 9399

Bushbuckridge

1280

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Application for permission to conduct research in the Bohlabela District.

My name is Tumelo Mathebula and I intend to conduct research for the purpose of obtaining a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As such, I hereby apply for permission to conduct a research project in Bohlabela District. The aim of the study is to investigate the teachers' expectations on parental involvement. The study will target only two primary schools in the district. Those schools will be from Thulamahashe and Igincourt Circuits. Hopefully the study will make a positive contribution to the literature on the interaction between parents and teachers. The results will be shared with the Department. I intend to engage your district in the following manner:

- Interview with the teachers of each school
- Only six teachers from the two selected schools will be interviewed (one teacher from foundation phase, one teacher from intermediate phase and one teacher from senior phase from each school).

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

Thanking you in advance and I Look forward to your positive response.

Regards

Tumelo Mathebula

E-mail: [tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com](mailto:tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com)

Cell: 073 136 1070

## **Appendix F: Sample letter to the principal of school A**

The Principal

A Primary School

Private Bag X 0000

Kumana Trust, Thulamahashe

1365

Dear Sir

Re: Application for permission to conduct research at your school.

My name is Tumelo Mathebula, and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I hereby apply for your permission to conduct research at your school. The aim of the study is to explore the teachers' expectations on parental involvement. The study will target the three teachers from your school. I hope that the study will make a meaningful contribution to the literature on the interaction between parents and teachers. The results will be shared with the school. I intend to engage your school in the following manner:

- Interview with one teacher from foundation phase
- Interview with one teacher from intermediate phase
- Interview with one teacher from senior phase

The interviews will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes per interview and the interviews will take place at your premises. Time and date will be discussed with the participants, depending on their availability.

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

I am looking forward to your positive response.

Regards

Tumelo Mathebula

E-mail: [tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com](mailto:tumelomathebula.remember@gmail.com)

Cell: 073 1361070

## **Appendix G: Sample letter to the principal of school B**

The Principal

B Primary School

Private Bag X 0001

Thulamahashe

1365

Dear Madam

Re: Application for permission to conduct research at your school.

My name is Tumelo Mathebula, and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I hereby apply for your permission to conduct research at your school. The aim of the study is to explore the teachers' expectations on parental involvement. The study will target the three teachers from your school. I hope that the study will make a meaningful contribution to the literature on the interaction between parents and teachers. The results will be shared with the school. I intend to engage your school in the following manner:

- Interview with one teacher from foundation phase
- Interview with one teacher from intermediate phase
- Interview with one teacher from senior phase

The interviews will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes per interview and the interviews will take place at your premises. Time and date will be discussed with the participants, depending on their availability.

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

I am looking forward to your positive response.

Regards

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