

**Teachers' and parents' perceptions of their
relationship: A case study of two secondary
schools in uBombo circuit, KwaZulu-Natal.**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements of the degree
of a Master of Education in Educational Administration at
the School of Education, Training and Development,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.**

By:

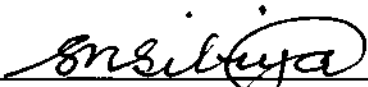
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August 2004

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DECLARATION

I, Simamile Nontokozo KaPhumasilwe, declare that this dissertation is indeed my own work and that I have quoted all the sources that I have used in this study by giving a complete reference at the end.



S. N. SIBIYA (MAMFENI)

Date: 21-01-2005

DEDICATION

I, Simamile Nontokozo dedicate this piece of work to my loving parents Aaron Phumasilwe and Ntombenhle Patricia (kaMkholo) Myeni for all the courage and support they have shown to me. May God grant them many more years of peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is my personal product through dedication and support of a number of people. My greatest appreciation is directed firstly to Dr Volker Wedekind, my supervisor, for his professional guidance, never-ending support, understanding and patience. Also to Stella Kabwe who left and her panel of tutors at the University of Natal for being courageous and influential in their teaching.

I also like to direct very special and sincere thanks to my companion John Velenkosini for his trust, support, understanding and long lasted perseverance. I am also grateful to my loving brothers, Gcinisizwe Thandokuhle, the late Thuthuka Vuketsheni and Sizo Gamelihle. Thanks also to my caring sisters, Sibongile Prudence and Tholinhlanhla Phumelele from Myeni family. Not forgetting the little ones Sithobiso, Mpilwenhle, Thanduxolo and Thulani Myeni's for missing their aunt's love and presence when I was away for studies. I also like to give sincere thanks to my loving daughter Zethembiso Sinothando for enduring pains of a busy mother. I also appreciate the help of Ntombi Thembeke Happiness Dlamini for a continuous support and taking care of Zethembiso and my cottage when I was away busy with my studies. I would like to also thank Mrs Fikile Maureen Mthembu for transport and moral support during my labour. I also thank my friendship with Nomusa Masimula for encouraging me throughout my studies.

I may not forget my 'big brother' Themba Mtambo for his optimistic ideas he indoctrinated in me. Most of all my sincere thanks to the Mdletshe family, more especially to Thembisile Virginia for accommodating, transporting me, and for teaching me basic computer skills. I cannot express my gratitude enough to the whole family that was so supportive and loving.

I must do justice by directing my greatest appreciation and gratitude to Thembinkosi Ezrom Harrington, my study partner, for being a true friend indeed by giving moral, social, material support, trust and for all the hard times and hurdles we shared and conquered on our endeavour to the freedom of mind.

I am also grateful to the Department of Education (KZN) for giving access to schools, also to school governing bodies, principals and their management teams, teachers and parent communities for granting permission for the study, and also for their participation and input. I also give thanks to my school principal Mr P.G. M. Mbambo and staff for being considerate and understanding.

I also thank Lara and Mathey for their editorial support. I further give thanks to my community, friends and my local church for being patient with me.

I further submit myself to The Mighty One for His merciful deeds. Without Him one would not cope at all.

ABSTRACT

Parent-teacher relationship and support to children are essential for effective education to be functional. Sound parent-teacher relationships influence teaching and learning. Hence it was evident from literature review that so many studies were conducted in parent involvement in schools to enhance teaching and learning, this study focused on the dimension of the perceptions of both teachers and parents on their relationship to accelerate parent involvement in schools. The study focused on how parents and teachers view their relationship, how they raise problems encountered in the relationship, what enhances and/or aggravates the status of their relationship, and the issue of policies pertaining parent-teacher relationship.

The objectives of the study were to examine and define the concept of the parent-teacher relationship, to investigate the perceptions of parents and teachers about their relationship with a focus on their obligations and responsibilities, to understand what enhances and/or impedes the parent-teacher relationship in rural Black communities, and to discuss possible solutions towards enhancing parent-teacher relationship.

The research questions were:

- a) How do parents and teachers describe their relationship?
- b) What factors do parents and teachers suggest impede and/or enhance their relationship?
- c) What school policies and practices are in place that facilitate or hinder the relationship?

The outline of the dissertation took this shape:

Chapter One provides a background to the study explaining the motive behind it, and discussing the rationale of the study. The main objectives of the study and the

research questions are explored in this chapter and the chapter has further furnished readers with the description of the setting of the schools under study.

Chapter Two defines terms used in the study, and then reviews relevant literature adopted in this study. The contextual and theoretical framework of the study is explored in this chapter.

Chapter Three deals with the methodological aspects and procedures. A justification on the use of qualitative approach is given and the choice of research instruments is also discussed. How access was gained from high structures to the parents on the ground level is also discussed. Experiences and methods used during interviews are also explored.

Chapter Four embarks on the clear milieu of the two schools, the initial visits and the description of respondents.

Chapter Five present, analyses and discusses the findings and implications of the study employing literature reviewed.

Chapter six and conclude the entire study and make recommendations.

The briefing of the study is of two schools that were selected purposively and then three teachers per school including the principal and six parents per school community that resulted in eighteen respondents in all.

The study opted for a qualitative approach and for a case study. The findings of the study were that there is poor or no parent-teacher relationship. Teachers and parents admitted the need for each other. Though parents admitted their deficiency in supporting schools and in making good relations with teachers, however, they shifted more blame to teachers who do not initiate the relationship whilst they stand a good chance. The study revealed that there are factors that impede parent-teacher relationship and those that are supposedly to enhance the relationship. Both parents and teachers raised a need for empowerment on how to deal with each other.

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Chapter One

Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction

This case study was undertaken in two secondary schools in the uBombo Circuit of the oBonjeni District in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal to determine the perceptions that parents and teachers have of each other, and the extent to which those perceptions impact on their relationship. UBombo Circuit is beset with poverty and struggling with minimum resources in its schools. The circuit is desperately seeking an improvement in the academic performance of learners in its schools. One of the factors that could play a role in improving the schools in the circuit is the relationship between parents and teachers. It is this issue that this study focuses on.

Context
of
study

This chapter outlines the background, scope and the rationale of this particular study. It outlines the research statement and sets down the main objectives of the study as well as the research questions. To give an understanding of the area in which the research was conducted, the milieu and setting of the area is also described. Finally, this chapter gives an overview of the whole study.

1.2 Background to the study

To get a clear picture of the interests that culminated in this study, let us first look at the historical and political background against which the study is set.

South African education is facing tremendous challenges, such as responding to the economic needs of the country, responding to community demands and delivering quality education to schools. Research suggests that one of the fundamental and integral elements in achieving quality education is the development of parent involvement in school activities (Haynes, Comer and Hamilton-Lee, 1989) and in learning activities at home (Epstein, 1996). The South African government is also engaged in promoting the necessity for parent involvement in our schools. In an endeavour to rehabilitate schools, the parent-teacher relationship is given top

priority by the government, the media, non-government organisations, traditional authorities and financial supporters.

Moreover, there is widely reported evidence that 'educators complain about a lack of parent involvement in public schools, and they have sought greater engagement and even collaboration' (Henry, 1996: 5). In addition to that, the researcher has experienced teachers in workshops and meetings in the uBombo circuit frequently expressing their discontent about the manner in which parents seem to isolate themselves from schools and their activities. However, Henry argued that 'to move in a direction of more successful collaboration, we need to know more about the perspectives of parents, teachers, and administrators, and about the constraints and dilemmas facing them' (Henry, 1996:5). This study takes this challenge up and is concerned with the perspectives of parents, teachers, and principals in terms of their relationships to each other.

1.3 The Context

This dissertation reports the findings of a study of two schools that are part of the 133 schools in the oBonjeni District, which in turn is divided into three circuits (Ubombo, Hlabisa and Ingwavuma). OBonjeni District is situated in Northern Zululand of KwaZulu-Natal and according to the new demarcation of the Government it falls under the Umkhanyakude District Council. The two schools are in the uBombo circuit, in two different wards governed by Traditional Authorities, i.e. Ntshongwe and Mbazwana. The Ubombo circuit is composed of thirty high schools. These schools are both in previously disadvantaged communities, mostly composed of Zulu-speaking teachers and learners. The schools are under the governance of School Governing Bodies (SGB) and they are both public schools.

The schools in the uBombo circuit are a reflection of the problems encountered daily in the surrounding area. Poverty, in addition to the low level of the parents' education, is a strong feature of the area serviced by the two schools. The impact of these problems are easily seen when one examines the educational realities of the

area – namely, poor results in Grade 12¹, high instances of dysfunctional schools, parent-related problems, staffing problems, a complete lack of the availability of resources (or at best, only a minimal availability of resources), teaching and learning problems, long distances from the homes to the schools, and behaviour problems of learners. The problems are underscored by a pervasive poverty in the communities surrounding the schools that make the problems difficult to address from a material perspective.

There are no industries or factories that might offer employment for large numbers of people, with the result that many of the inhabitants have moved to towns to secure jobs. Generally, most people in the area are struggling to survive. Hospitals, schools, police stations and shops are the main source of employment for people. Farming at Makhathini Flats and sawmills in the wetlands also offer jobs to people. Some people work in the game reserves that are in the area and others are vendors selling vegetables, fruit, craftwork, clothing and material, which are on offer to the community and to tourists. Moreover, the community is supported by work opportunities at Sodwana Bay. There are a few White residents who supply permanent and temporary jobs to the community at Sodwana Bay. Some children also work occasionally at Makhathini flats and at Sodwana Bay. Sodwana Bay is a famous tourist destination for scuba diving and fishing, and the tourist infrastructure assists the poor community by offering jobs. Makhathini Flats is also famous for the fresh produce that is sold there.

The climate is sub-tropical with moderate winters and very hot summers. There are trees and bushes from which the people collect wood. Much of the area appears to be spacious because some people prepare their dwelling sites by cutting down the trees. Nevertheless, the area is developing in some aspects because people have access to piped water, electricity, tarred roads, telephones, as well as schools with a few resources such as fax machines, photocopiers, computers, etc.

¹ In 2001 the Ubombo circuit pass rate was 44,71%
 In 2002 the Ubombo circuit pass rate was 43,16%
 In 2003 the Ubombo circuit pass rate was 49, %

Besides crimes that are a result of development in the area, such as hijacking, robbery, rape, and stabbings and/or shootings, there are also those crimes that are common in rural areas, such as accusations of witchcraft, stealing stock, etc.

There are two hospitals in the area. Each one has to cover a very large area, with the result that clinics are the most commonly available health centres. The development of the area has brought in a few independent medical doctors who work in their private surgeries.

Normal schooling is obtained in public schools from pre-primary to high schools. In the absence of tertiary institutions children have to move to towns and cities to further their education, but due to financial constraints very few children are able to make the move.

1.4 Parent-Teacher Relationship

Studies have engaged in a number of models and categories of parent involvement, yet little has been said about how parents and teachers perceive their relationship and about how parents and teachers actually relate to each other. A number of theories are advocated with regard to parent involvement. Parents are urged to be involved with teachers to help learners through adulthood. This relationship simply means working together co-operatively. Working together, from the researcher's view, would require an acceptance as co-workers, combining resources and abilities with the express intention of achieving educational goals, and developing good working relationships.

It is surmised that issues associated with the school that may influence the level of parent participation included the nature of the setting (rural, suburban or urban), size, academic focus, climate, and sense of community, or in other words, context is important. Most literature on teacher-parent relationships and parent involvement is either British or American, and very little has been written about the South African context. There is a noticeable deficiency of studies done in rural schools, and fewer still that take cognisance of the relationship/partnership between parents and

teachers, especially not with any kind of focus on their perspectives and perceptions. Parent involvement and parent-teacher relationships may vary from a First World urban environment, to the rural communities in South Africa. One of the aims of this study is to provide a perspective on this under studied context.

1.5 The Significance or rationale of the Study

As an introductory statement, the intention of the study is to explore the significance of home/school relationships.

Most of the interest emanated from having been a teacher in a Black secondary school in a rural community for a number of years. The researcher's involvement for a number of years in the school governing body as a teacher representative exposed her to many instances of problems encountered with parent participation in schools. In 2000 the researcher was appointed as a Head of Department, which meant being a member of the School Management Team (SMT) involved with working closer with both teachers and parents. The researcher's interest was also spurred by learning through the media and reading about parent involvement in schools, both within the South African context and internationally. Among a number of problems that are facing schools, especially in Black communities, is the role played by parents and the effort they put into the education of their children. Having a belief that parents can play a vital role in education, the researcher subsequently focused on parent involvement in schools. Hence, there was an understanding that parent involvement is multidimensional, multifaceted and complex. Of the various components contiguous to home-school relationships, this study expands on the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding their relationships.

The researcher spent a lot of time deliberating the different aspects of the parent-teacher relationship, which in turn produced the following relevant questions:

- Why and how do schools involve parents as partners?
- What type of parent-teacher relationships may yield positive outcomes?

- What roles are attributed to parents and to teachers?
- What are the parameters of operation for each participant?
- What strategies can be implemented for sustaining the relationships?

1.6 Research Statement

The study examines the perceptions of parents and teachers of their relations, with a view to exploring the nature of the existing parent-teacher relationships, the factors that enhance and/or impede the relationship between parents and teachers, and identifying some potential strategies for sustaining sound parent-teacher relationships.

The main objectives of the study are:

- to examine and define the concept of the parent-teacher relationship;
- to investigate the perceptions of parents and teachers about their relationship with a focus on their obligations and responsibilities;
- to understand what enhances and/or impedes the parent-teacher relationship in rural Black communities;
- to discuss possible solutions towards enhancing the parent-teacher relationship.

There is evidence that there is a greater level of parental involvement in primary schools than in secondary schools. However the secondary phase is a critical stage in the learning of a child because this stage determines the future of the child. It is thus important to understand what happens at secondary schools that results in lower levels of parent involvement. As an educator in a secondary school I wanted to look at the experience of parental involvement in secondary schools and understand its processes. Moreover, educational problems at secondary schools are often more extreme than in primary schools, thus further adding to the rationale for studying this level.

1.7 Research Questions

In order to examine the extent to which the research statement would be answered and/or refuted by the findings, the following questions were used to gather data:

- a) How do parents and teachers describe their relationship?
- b) What factors do parents and teachers suggest impede and/or enhance their relationship?
- c) What school policies and practices are in place that facilitate or hinder the relationship?

1.8 Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter One provides a background to the study explaining the motives behind it, and discussing the rationale of the study. The main objectives of the study and the research questions are explored in this chapter.

Chapter Two defines the terms used in the study, and then reviews relevant literature adopted in this study. The contextual and theoretical framework of the study is explored in this chapter.

Chapter Three addresses the issues of methodological aspects and procedures of the study. A justification for the use of a qualitative approach is given and the choice of research instruments is also discussed. How access was gained from high structures to the parents at ground level is also discussed. Experiences and methods used during interviews are also explored.

Chapter Four gives a background to the schools under study in order to give a broader picture.

Chapter Five embarks on the findings and implications of the study employing literature reviewed. The chapter also discusses the findings.

Chapter Six serves as a last chapter and makes recommendations and concludes the study.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one has dealt with the origin of the study looking at the background, significance and rationale. This chapter locates the study in relation to relevant studies already done by other researchers. At the outset, this chapter engages in defining the terms employed in this study. It also further reviews literature relevant to this study. The conceptual and methodological framework is also reviewed.

2.2 Definition of terms

In the current education system an important aspect of the South African Schools Act (SASA) is the principle that there should be a partnership between all stakeholders who have an interest in education. These are the state, parents, learners, educators, and other members of the community in close proximity to the schools. Some of these terms require some definition for purposes of this study.

2.2.1 Learner

A learner is a person from the age of six to eighteen years (irrespective of gender, disability, socio-economic background, race, ethnicity and religion) who receives education in terms of the SASA. We will therefore consider a learner in formal schooling. According to the SASA a learner has the right to basic education and is the most important stakeholder in education.

2.2.2 Parent

In this study the definition of parent is taken from SASA and refers to:

- the natural parent of a learner whether male or female;

- the guardian of a learner;
- a person legally entitled to custody (physical control) of a learner;
- a person who undertakes to act as a parent of a learner for the purpose of the learner's education at school. (SASA, 1996)

It also incorporates caregivers, and grandparents who act as parents, as is common in Black societies.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The key concepts used in this study are 'partnership', 'perceptions' and 'relationships'. Each of these requires definition.

2.3.1 Partnership

A partnership in the business world is defined as a number of people who have a common goal, co-operating with one another by contributing something of value (for example, money, skills, and so on) to the relationship with the aim of making a profit. Partners may have different roles to play in a partnership, and the term does not imply entirely equal relationships. In the educational field the 'profit' is better education for all learners.

2.3.2 Perceptions

The common understanding of the concept 'perception' which relates to its English derivation from the verb 'perceive' implies a way of viewing things from one's point of view, perspective and cognitive criteria.

Fearon's definition is similar to the definition of perception adopted by Convery et al. (1997), namely a concept that regards perceptions to be personal knowledge and attitudes. Most definitions attribute attitudes to perceptions.

Though there may be diversity in defining perceptions, for this study 'perceptions' imply the intent to convey attitudes, discernments, insights and judgments.

2.3.3. Relationships

Relationships imply negotiated solutions, shared decision-making, peer networks, dialogue and partnership (Henry, 1996). It also relates to the manner that people engage in interaction when dealing with one another. It further refers to how people associate and communicate. For this study family-school relationships are akin to parent-teacher relationships. The point is that from the family side the study focuses on parents, and from the school side it focuses on teachers. They will both be used interchangeably.

2.4 Theoretical framework

Badenhorst (1993) identified the parent-teacher relationship as one that, if it was to fulfil the task of education, required both parties to actively participate and contribute. Neither the parent nor the teacher alone can fulfil the education task to any degree of satisfaction for all parties concerned. They further defined the social relations as a complex and creative process, much like a dance, where potential for synergies are great, but require co-ordination.

A positive relationship between parents and teachers would have the following features:

- **Mutual trust, understanding, acceptance, respect and consideration.** This would imply that their intentions and desires are honest, sincere and pure, i.e. they seek the best for the child. It is understood that a relationship is a process that implies an element of continuity and development (Atkin and Bastiani, 1988). They must acknowledge each other's position, situation and expectations. Both parties should develop a sense of respect and view themselves as equal partners in the education of the children.

- **Healthy openness.** As the relationship unfolds, partners should develop transparency in order to strengthen their trust. Both teachers and parents should be open to each other about educational matters and those that involve children.
- **Solidarity.** In the sense that they support each other wholeheartedly, both parties should develop interest in and give support to each other.
- **Equivalence, in spite of their differences.** Parents and teachers should view themselves as equal partners in the education of children. Superiority of one party may lead to alienation and an inferiority complex on the part of the other and thus a dysfunctional relationship might develop.
- **Understanding of the specific task of the other party.** The roles of each party are clear and parameters of operation defined, so that possible intrusion in the other person's terrain is minimised.
- **Effective communication.** Communication strategies should be devised to develop positive relationships. Teachers stand a better chance of playing an initiative role in communicating with parents and pioneering the whole communication process because parents hold them in high regard.

These features will be adopted as an initial conceptual framework for the study.

The concept of **parental involvement** can be described as the **relationship** which parents and teachers share, that allows both groups to use their abilities to the full in order to give children the best possible education (Maharaj, 1987). Therefore, the two concepts of parent involvement and relationship are intertwined, and will form the basic concepts of this study. Henry (1996) calls for a successful collaboration of parents, teachers and principals. **Collaboration** implies teamwork, partnership, relationship, co-operation, group effort, alliance and association.

Moreover, In order to discuss the concept of parent involvement in more detail it is necessary to define the concept. Some writers like Epstein (1992) and Keith (1991)

suggest that parent involvement should be carefully defined, in order to identify factors that influence it. Conversely, one may not be able to give an explicit definition of parent involvement, as it is a multifaceted concept (Feuerstein, 2000).

In this study, parent involvement is understood as the active participation of parents in the education of their children at all levels. For purposes of this study, participation of parents would include their co-operation and support of the school, assisting learners at home, working in harmony with the school, in addition to being considerate of the child's social, moral, spiritual, physical and material needs. A parent is thus a primary 'teacher' who instills in the child a set of values that impact on the school.

In South Africa, parents have a statutory right to be involved in their children's education. The SASSA clearly outlines the rights of parents in education, including their participation in the form of governing bodies. Parents serve as elected members on governing bodies and must ensure that high schools provide a high standard of education. Parents as stakeholders have responsibilities and obligations towards education.

Besides, teachers can learn from parents' intimate knowledge of their children. No one knows the child better than the parent, and parents are likely to take their child's perspective and to advocate for children's rights in making educational decisions. So, one reason for a parent-teacher partnership is gaining access to the knowledge that parents have about their children, in order to make better decisions, to enhance learning opportunities and to build support for schools (Henry, 1996).

Furthermore, parents are legally obligated to ensure that their children attend school from the first school day of the year when a child reaches the age of six, until the last school day of the year in which a learner reaches the age of fifteen years, or Grade 9 (which is regarded as compulsory education), whichever occurs first.

Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995) extend the parents' basic obligations to that which incorporates providing children with food, shelter, clothes, health care and safety. Parents are also obliged to lay the foundations of education at home, like teaching

good manners, acceptable behaviour and respect for authority. Parents ought to capacitate children to be responsible in life. Therefore the home setting impacts significantly on the school.

Collaborating with parents may be a way to avoid any unexpected intrusions and to reduce antagonism between parents and teachers.

Feuerstein (2000) affirmed that schools have the ability to improve levels of parent participation in the schooling process, because schools can easily reach out to parents and mobilise the community for the benefit of children. Hence parents can provide much needed resources to the public schools, such as free labour and expertise (Winters, 1993). They must be actively involved in the running of the schools. It does not end in involving parents, but parents ought to feel an ownership of the schools where they send their children.

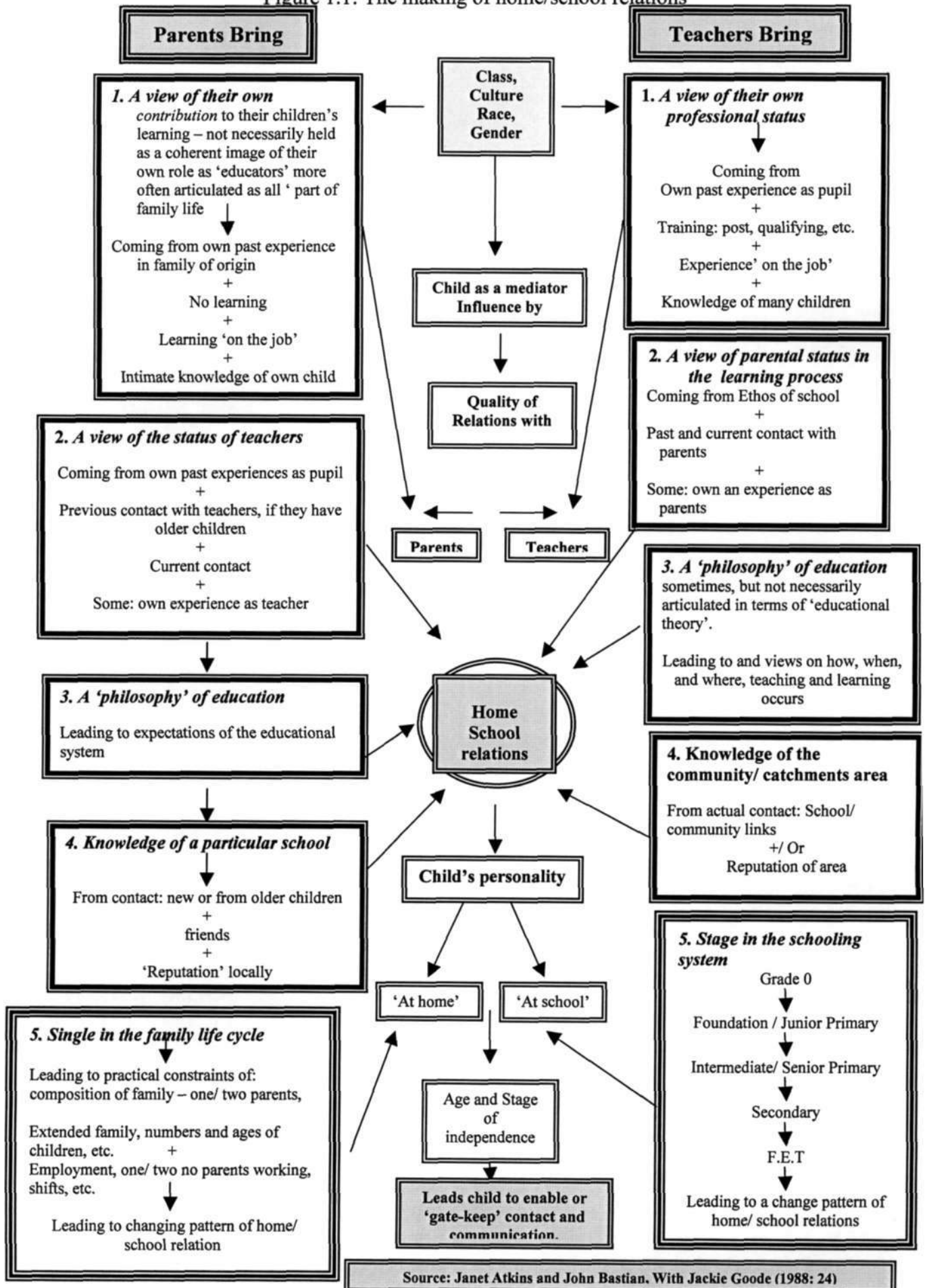
The involvement of parents can improve school accountability and make schools more responsive to community needs. Parents can bring new insights to the educational arena since they are not bound or limited by existing practices or by being part of the formal education system. Educators, for example, may not want to evaluate a colleague negatively, but parents may feel more able to do so (Moore, 1992; 150).

Perhaps, most importantly, a reason to enhance parents' participation in public schools is that student outcomes are positively affected by increased parent involvement. The research literature suggests that parent involvement impacts on children's achievement and that the primary factor for children's educational success or failure is parent interest and support (Epstein, 1996; Epstein, 1990; Berger, 1995; Henderson, 1988; Greenwood and Hickman, 1991; Muller, 1993; Pena, 2000; Badenhurst, 1993; Woods, 1989; Bastiani, 1989; Gestwicki, 2000; Ziegler, 1987). Parent involvement in schooling in itself is believed to positively affect children's 'achievements, attitudes and aspirations, even after student ability and family socio-economic status are taken into account' (Epstein, 1987, 120). The relationship between child achievement and parent involvement is bi-directional and

relies on the actions of each variable (Ginsburg and Bronstein, 1994; Grolnick and Ryan, 1989; Scott-Jones, 1987; Seginer, 1983; Yoon, et al., 1993; Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons, 1992). Walberg (1984) reviewed twenty-nine controlled studies and found that parent involvement in school was twice as predictive of academic success as socio-economic status. The greater the degree of parent involvement, the greater the degree of positive influence on the school and the greater the degree of their positive interaction with the teachers (Henry, 1996: 17).

Atkin and Bastiani (1988) with Goode reflected that relationships of any kind consist of two elements: what the two parties bring to the relationship, and what they then do with what they've brought - a historical or 'biographical' element, and a 'dynamic' element. We will first explore what the two elements constitute. The figure below outlines what parents and teachers bring to the relationships, and highlights the complexity of parent-teacher relationships.

Figure 1.1: The making of home/school relations



The diagram above shows blocks on the left-hand side under 'parents bring' and other blocks on the right-hand side under 'teachers bring'. In the blocks there are points numbered 1 to 5. The five points in the illustration will be compared and discussed alternatively according to points starting from point 1 to 5, with parents and then teachers. The middle part of the illustration will be summarised at the end of the five points.

The first point is parents' view of their own contribution, which entails the attitudes, and how parents perceive themselves in the relationship. Parents come from different socio-economic backgrounds with different levels of education. What they all have in common is that they have intimate knowledge of their children. Therefore teachers can potentially get a better understanding of their children so as to make teaching and learning more possible. Accessibility to that information demands sound relationships because some of the information is sensitive and thus ethical issues need to be addressed. On the other hand, teachers also come from their own families with different experiences in life, and also bring with them certain ways in which they were socialised, at home, at training institutions, and on the job. Their own beliefs and values thus play a role in how they attempt to socialise their learners. This may then cause tensions with the current policies and constitution. For instance, there are still a number of teachers who adopt an aggressive (and outdated) approach to teaching, and who still continue with the illegal administering of corporal punishment, with the consequence that it leads to conflict with parents.

The second point refers to the view of the status of teachers by parents. Parents have their knowledge of a typical teacher from their own school experiences and perhaps more recent experience with older children, and they know how they used to engage with teachers. Some parents are teachers themselves and have their own understanding about teachers. On the other hand teachers view parents according to their own understanding. Past and current engagements with parents, and being parents themselves, impact on their way of dealing with parents.

The third point is what parents view as the philosophy of education. This will make parents have certain expectations when viewing teachers and attach their own

meaning to the concept of an acceptable teacher, whereas teachers have their theories on when and how teaching occurs. Teachers also often view themselves as educated professionals and incomparable with parents, particularly when many of them are illiterate or have low levels of education.

The fourth point deals with the knowledge parents have of a particular model of school and thereby judge other schools comparatively. The danger of this rigid judgement may be that stereotyped thinking may develop and lead to parents not accepting differences in schools. Teachers also have their knowledge on how the community relates to schools. Teachers may have their preconceived ideas about parents' reputations of co-operating or not co-operating with teachers. In such a case either positive or negative attitudes are developed.

The fifth point pertains to the lifestyle of the family. The child may be from a single parent, two parents, polygamous family, an orphan, or an extended family. Socio-economic background also plays an important role in the relationship. The life that the child is experiencing at home impacts on the child.

The above discussion suggests that there is a need to strategize the relationship between parents and teachers. In order to do this it is necessary to understand the different dimensions of parental involvement.

2.5 Categories of parent involvement

Studies differ in their approach to levels or categories and/or models of parent involvement. Dimock, O'Donogue and Robb (1996) in Feuerstein (2000) pinpoint the following useful distinctions that form a set of categories of parent involvement:

- **The choice of school.** As a rule parents select educational institutions for their children, but in some instances children do the selection themselves. When the choice is made a number of factors are taken into cognisance, such as the reputation of the school, attitudes towards the school, pass rates of learners (especially Grade 12 results), behaviour of both teachers and learners, and

school location or accessibility. Some parents, because of a number of reasons (one being low level of education and/or poverty), do not have the option of choosing schools, and send their children to the nearest schools. Nevertheless, it is common with middle class, working class and well-to-do parents to have a distinctive choice of schools for their children. The practice of choosing schools is gaining momentum worldwide (Murphy, 1990).

- **Decision making through formal structures.** Parents are incorporated in school governance. The SASA stipulates explicitly the need for parents to be involved in the governance of schools. Governing bodies that are constituted by learners, teachers and parent's representatives are a direct regulation of the government.
- **Involvement in teaching and learning.** This involvement is threefold:
 - a) **In the classroom,** where parents who are capable or who are also teachers can provide knowledge for their children by volunteering teaching in the school which their child attends. Though this volunteering aspect is still sporadic in nature in South African schools, it is one feasible way in which parents can show involvement;
 - b) **Out of the classroom,** parents can also be involved in extra-curricular activities. Even parents with low levels of education can volunteer to teach culture, sports, music (traditional and/or modern) and other skills. It could be a worthwhile contribution that can also enhance teaching and learning;
 - c) **At home,** parents can be involved by helping with homework, affording children study time, giving all forms of necessary support, encouragement and sometimes monitoring study times where the need arises.
- **Effect on the physical and material environment.** This aspect concerns parents ensuring safety and security in schools and development of infrastructure. This sphere of security in schools seems to be neglected by the communities, families and parents, let alone the government. There are a number of cases of burglary, high jacking, theft, rape and killings taking place in

schools, and there seem to be no strategies to address the situation. Within the schools there are still too many instances of such criminal activities. Parents have to ensure that the school environment is conducive to teaching and learning. Parents' support and protection of the schools thus enhances sound relationships between parents and teachers.

- **Parents' role in communication between home and school.** In this category, parents can play a significant role in communicating with teachers about behaviour, school rules and principles. Parents can discuss learner progress with teachers and be able to identify possible problems that impact on teaching and learning. Also the positive areas of the child could be discussed and encouraged. Parents can also initiate communication but teachers stand a better chance to enhance parents' communication potential.

These categories are used in this study in order to describe the different forms of the parent-teacher relationship in one way or another. Following this is the discussion on the aspects that hinder or impact on parent-teacher relationships. Those aspects become barriers and/or influences on the relationship.

2.6 Roles in education

As said previously, in any relationship people play different roles. Structured roles are defined and created through the human interaction and in context, rather than through something that is pre-determined by structures already in place. Reality is subjective in nature, that is, we create it by shaping a common understanding (Blumer, 1962). Theoretically, interactionism focuses on the degree to which social structures and cultural factors are created through processes of interaction. We understand the world through symbols, of which language is but one. Even the way we talk, dress and walk have symbolic interpretations attached to them.

Blumer (1962) defines an understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effect. 'Action' includes all human behaviour

when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it. There are sets of roles and different definitions of what the roles of parents, teachers and children are in the context of education. Certain roles are attributed to people and defined as perceived by parents and teachers in terms of how things should be - that is the ideal role; and in terms of how things actually are - that is real and is created in context. Moreover, roles are not fixed. They are created in a situation.

In South Africa people are regulated by rules and regulations and the government reserves the right to attribute certain roles to people as it sees the need, more especially with regards to its employees. In a school situation the government also attributes certain roles to parents and to teachers. However, Blumer (1962) argues that people, who are the acting units, do not act towards culture and social structure but they act towards situations and therefore roles are created through the relationships in context and in interaction.

Nevertheless, for teachers the employer defines its requirements in the form of policies like the Norms and Standards for Educators, the SACE Code of Conduct, the Manual for Developmental Appraisal, and the duties and responsibilities of educators. Together, these documents define employer requirements, provide frameworks for professional development and appraisal, define professional conduct and specify the duties and responsibilities of educators. In conjunction with these policies mentioned previously there were other policy documents regulating schools. These were the South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996, Educators Employment Act, no 76 of 1998, Labour Relations Act, no. 66 of 1995 and SACE.

Having mentioned a number of documents that stipulate a number of employers' expectations from the employee, at this point the study will focus on the ideal roles of teachers in schooling as stipulated in the Government Gazette, no. 21565, vol. 423 pages 65 and 66 of 22 September 2000. The roles are:

- Learning mediator
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials

- Leader, administrator and manager
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- Community, citizenship and pastoral role
- Assessor
- Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

However, policy is not universal, and though it may stipulate roles for people, in reality roles are created and not pre-determined. Of the above mentioned roles it must be noted that whilst they are of equal importance, the role of the teacher in the community, citizenship and pastoral will be the focus for this particular study.

The SASA also stipulates expectations of parents' roles in the education system. Parents have to be involved in the classroom, outside of the classroom and at home. Therefore, teachers and parents together with children all have formally defined and regulated roles to play in the education system.

There is a growing shift in the roles and responsibilities of parents as a consequence of processes of modernisation, which has consequences for educational institutions. An expansion on the factors that Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995) explained as influential to the parent-teacher relationships is explained below:

- ❖ Within the context of today's economic needs, most women have had to join the labour force. As a result the majority of South African mothers find themselves being overly occupied with their work, running businesses or being vendors, and in addition having to do their domestic work. Mothers find this dual responsibility of being both homemakers and breadwinners (employees and employers) an exhausting undertaking. An unfortunate, but inevitable, consequence is that more often than not they leave the entire responsibility of their children's education in the hands of teachers.
- ❖ Time constraints are interfering with family life because in families where both parents are working for a living they are left with little or no time for

the attention of their children's education. The economic demands have placed families under severe financial pressure. This results in a huge number of people seeking jobs as a response to those demands. Moreover, most parents have to leave their homes and move closer to the working places. Consequently, children find themselves entrusted with their own education and having to make and bear the repercussion of their own, uninformed decisions.

- ❖ There is also been an increasing number of orphaned children. This may have resulted from accidents, the high rate of crime, but especially from the epidemic disease that has befallen this generation, namely the Human Immune Virus (HIV) pandemic and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Some of these factors lead to a traumatic change in social behaviour overall as well as in individual relationships and consequently has had an impact on the education of the child.

Some parents, more especially in the Black communities, work far away from their homes and have to leave their children behind. Some children stay in rented houses by themselves, a situation which exposes them to take full responsibility for themselves demanding levels of maturity that exceed the norm. Even then the relationship with parents should be carefully planned and considered to accommodate the realities of the conditions of the parents. Attending meetings is not a sole indicator or a pre-condition of parent participation and good relations with the school. It is the researcher's belief that no school, either public or private, can successfully fulfil its objectives without the participation of the school parent community.

2.7 Barriers and/or influences on the relationships

2.7.1 Socio-economic background

Socio-economic background is a crucial factor, particularly when referring to rural families. Poor parents who themselves are in a constant struggle trying to make ends

meet for themselves and their children, are further taxed with the burden of the educational processes. All schools in South Africa are sustained through school fees, which means that the school is directly affected by the parents' ability to pay these fees. In addition, parents may view schools as tax collectors and eventually develop negative attitudes towards the school.

2.7.2 Educational background of parents

The educational background of parents plays a vital role in their relationships with the world in general. This is over and above the inherent differences in every person that makes us all individuals, and which in turn are influenced by cultural, social, educational, emotional, ethical and moral differences. Therefore parents with low educational levels may feel inferior when intervening in the educational processes. In addition parents with less education are less likely to help their child at home (Watkins, 1997). A low level of education of the parents leads to frustration when they learn that they lack the skills to help their children (Watkins, 1997). Moreover there is mounting evidence that some parents distance themselves from family-school relationships because of differences in language or limited education (Epstein, 1990; Rich, 1993).

2.7.3 Historical background and reputation of the school

The reputation of schools plays a significant role in parent-teacher relationships. Parents have their anxieties alleviated when they learn that the climate of a particular school is positive or meets their expectations. The reputation of the school impacts on the parents' school choice. In simple terms, parents define schools as either good or bad. The school's historical background and reputation are an integral and inseparable aspect of the school. The issue of the reputation of the school is that it goes with the school for quite some time even if its operations are improved from bad to good or decline from good to bad.

2.7.4 Parents' perceptions

Parents who believe that they should be involved in the parent-teacher relationship and who have a sense of efficacy are likely to be involved in their children's education (Hoover, Dempsey and Sandler, 1997). Parents become involved based upon communication they receive from their children's teachers (Watkins, 1997). Other studies (Ames, et al., 1993, 1994; Comer, 1986; Epstein, 1986, 1990) also share the same notion of teacher communication that can increase many forms of parent involvement.

Parents' attitudes also diverge and converge among themselves. A study by Lareau (1989) shows that middle and upper-middle class parents perceive their involvement and communication with teachers positively as shared responsibility, whereas low-income, working class and non-working parents view education as primarily for teachers. This finding is of particular significance for this study given the rural context of the schools.

2.7.5 Teachers' perceptions

In Figure 1.1 it was identified what parents bring and what teachers bring to the relationship. These operate interactively to shape each other. Teachers are inclined to interpret low attendance at school functions as lack of parental interest in their children's learning. However, involvement of parents in decision-making produces more tensions than other types of involvement, such as helping teachers or raising funds. Involving parents in decision-making creates varied opinions and outcomes therefore principals in some schools still give preference to imposing the agenda of involving parents (Feuerstein, 2000). This results in the majority of schools not involving parents in policy decision-making and taking decisions by themselves (Feuerstein, 2000.)

The fact should be noted that not all teachers and staff members are comfortable with increased parent-school collaboration (Coleman, 1991). This feeling emerges from differing attitudes, so it stands to reason why Epstein and Dauber (1991) assert

that in the school environment in which teachers' personal attitudes are not on par with parents' attitudes, teachers are less likely to support parent involvement programmes. It becomes evident now that teachers who are not actively involving parents and whose schools, like the two cases for this study, teach children with less educated parents, are more likely to report that parents are unable or unwilling to assist children with their school work (Feuerstein, 2000).

2.8 Benefits of the teacher-parent relationships

As stated previously, the benefits of parent-teacher relationship would first be for the learners and subsequently for the parents and teachers, meaning families and schools. Studies of parent involvement (Epstein, 1990; Rich, 1993; Henderson, 1981, 1987) have supported the many benefits of parent involvement in schools that yield positive results (Pena, 2000).

2.8.1 Subsequent returns attributed to learners, parents and teachers

The home and family members play a significant role in the shaping of the child's conception of school as well as in determining the child's positive and/or negative views about schooling in general (Jephson, 1995). Indeed these benefits are achievable when parents are involved in the education of the child, and will help detect complications in earlier stages. Maharaj (in Ngwenya, 1996) argues that parent involvement implies a change of attitudes and approaches to teaching and learning among teachers. Attitudes play a vital role in any relationship, and if properly addressed, would be beneficial to all stakeholders and therefore ease the burden of teaching and learning in schools. Maharaj's study, conducted in Durban, South Africa, of parent-teacher relationships revealed how parents alienate themselves and are reluctant to interact with schools that have poor teacher strategies of attracting parents (1987).

When parents are successfully attracted to their relationship with teachers they will disclose more information about their children because they know them best. This

would support teachers' understanding of their learners and in turn enhance the teaching and learning.

Parents will be relieved when knowing that their children are entrusted with people with whom they have a good relationship. Those schools that favour the involvement of parents and relate well with those parents, out-perform schools with little parent involvement (Epstein, 1987; Henderson, 1988). The overall quality of the school is uplifted. Parents who relate positively with teachers and the school can offer voluntary services and support for the school programmes and children's progress (Epstein, 1986). Moreover, involved parents develop higher educational aspirations for their children (Greenwood and Hickman, 1991). It does not end there; parents who are successfully involved tend to develop positive attitudes towards their children's teachers (Greenwood and Hickman, 1991).

Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995) give an account of the benefits and practical implications of active parent involvement, namely: the improvement of children's academic achievement, attitudes and aspirations, an increased motivation to attend school, an involvement in the structures of the school by the community, and vice versa, parental assistance in the management of the school, a reduction of misunderstanding and possible conflict with the school and an improvement of home/school communication.

Badenhorst and Scheepers understand the South African context in which the schools being studied here operate. The background knowledge of learners is equally important in dealing with the learner. The challenges and problems emanating from the teacher-child relationship also hinder effective teaching and learning.

2.8.2 Possible Negative Consequences

It is from the researcher's understanding of institutions and organisations, notwithstanding their size or the number of persons involved, that problems and challenges will always be a part of their existence. Consequently, it is undoubtedly

true that schools are facing problems and challenges that need to be addressed, but 'without co-operation, collaborative relationships, school problems are not going to be easy to address' (Henry, 1996: 1). However, some researchers like Maria de Carvalho (2001: 26) posed provocative questions in her study. She raises questions like these that follow:

- On what forms and kinds of contribution is school's success dependent?
- To what extent are families and parents able to contribute to school success?
- What are the legitimacy, viability and efficacy of the educational policy reach over families?
- To what extent should public schools depend on families and parents playing a particular role?
- What is the legitimate and viable range of parental involvement and choice within the context of a public school?

These are serious challenges to the overall dominance in the literature that treats parental involvement as largely unproblematic and raises questions of the possible negative consequences of policies that promote parental involvement. However, addressing these questions goes beyond the scope of this study.

2.9 Related Local Literature

Like all research this study has built on other studies in the same field. Mthembu (1999) looked at the parental involvement in academic and non-academic activities in a secondary school in Clermont, South Africa. Maharaj (1987) also conducted a study on parent-teacher relationships in Durban, South Africa. The sampling employed in these studies incorporated learners, teachers, parents and other important figures in the community. In this study only parents and teachers (including principals) form the basis of respondents.

The research instruments used in these studies varied from semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. The broader issues discussed in these studies were that there are problems and challenges facing learners' education.

Besides a number of factors that influence children's education there are also contextual factors that have an influence. The studies also revealed that parent involvement should be maximised and parent-school communication improved. Also the socio-economic background of learners that was broadly studied by Mncwabe (Undated) revealed that learners encounter severe family life problems that impact greatly on children's education, such as a lack of space, lack of privacy, lack of electricity, lack of time, lack of support, encouragement and interest in their schooling from parents, overcrowding, and negative attitudes from their teachers.

The current study differs in that it is a case study for two secondary schools in uBombo circuit. It has also considered parents and teachers as respondents. The focal point of this study is to examine the perceptions of teachers and parents on their relationship. The research setting is unique in the sense that it is conducted in a remote rural area where the nearest tertiary institutions are more than 150 km away.

2.10 Conclusion

Having presented and given an account in this chapter of the literature relevant to this study, Chapter Three will deal with the methodology and procedure of the study.

Chapter Three

3. Methodology and procedure

3.1 Introduction

This chapter lays out the research design and the reasons for having chosen them are discussed. The chapter further discusses the manner of gaining access used in the study and sources of information. Sampling procedure, data collection techniques, interviews for parents and teachers and document analysis are also discussed. Finally, the validity and ethical issues, followed by problems encountered are discussed.

3.2 The research design

3.2.1 Choice of the research setting

Because the intention was to obtain relational data, the study opted for a qualitative case study. The intention was to examine and explore the perceptions of both parents and teachers, and therefore a qualitative approach was found to be relevant for this kind of research.

A case study was considered to have the following advantages because:

- It is concerned with rich and vivid descriptions of events relevant to the case.
- It also provides a chronological narrative of relevant events.
- It blends a description of events with the analysis of them.
- It focuses on individuals or a group of individuals, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.
- It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.
- The researcher is integrally involved in the case.

- An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing a report. (Hitchcock and Hughes: 1995)

Though it is common for case studies to focus on one school, this study focuses on two secondary schools. It is thus possible for a level of comparison within the case study. Owing to time and financial constraints, the researcher had to opt for a study that would be manageable to a novice researcher. One of the limitations of a case study is that the opportunity for generalisation is not possible.

3.2.2 Access to schools

Access to schools, was arranged by submitting a letter to the office of the General Secretary of Education-Ulundi, and thereafter to the Chief Superintendent of Education Management (CSEM) of the uBombo circuit. After having dealt with the top levels of the educational structure, access was negotiated via school principals and governing bodies, by hand-delivering letters requesting to conduct interviews with teachers and parents. Access still had to be negotiated with the teachers and the principal of each school. The dates were successfully agreed upon for the preliminary meetings. After the meetings, dates for individual interviews had to be agreed upon.

Access had to be negotiated with parents as well, so two senior people, known to the researcher, were chosen and entrusted in each of the two areas respectively, to negotiate access to parents on the researchers' behalf. These negotiations were a success. Parents were also requested to choose dates for interviews that were convenient to them. On the agreed upon date, the person who negotiated access for the researcher accompanied the researcher to the interviewee for introduction and to strengthen the trust between the two parties. Once left alone, re-introductions were necessary, as well as further explanations to deal with any objections or misgivings with regards to the tape recorder that had to be used. The interview proceeded once the respondent was comfortable. Personal visits were made to the homes of all the respondents of the study, from teachers to parents. All respondents chose the place convenient to them, entitling the researcher to visit homes, cottages and schools at

times stipulated by them, sometimes in the morning, during the day or even late in the afternoons and evenings.

Ethical issues were considered. These included an overall explanation of the need for the research as well as the importance of participation. The reasons for the study were clearly explained to the respondents prior to the actual interview process. The researcher explained the anonymity and confidentiality of this particular research. The benefits of the study were also explained to the respondents.

3.2.3 Sources of information

Data were gathered from parents of registered learners, school-based teachers and current school principals. Additional data were gathered through document analysis of minutes of meetings for School Governing Bodies (SGB), teachers and parents. School policies were also examined.

3.3 The data collection

3.3.1 Sampling procedure

Initially, non-probability, purposive sampling was adopted for the selection of two secondary schools. The one school has been established for more than twenty years and the other for less than ten years. Fictitious names were given to schools and will be adopted throughout the study. The small school was named 'Rabbit' and was chosen because it was struggling for almost all resources including staffing, material and financial. The big school was named 'Lizard' and was chosen because it operated on a larger capacity with better facilities than Rabbit school in terms of staffing, material and physical resources. The principal of the small school was a female whilst the principal of the big school was a male. The small school had no problem with matriculation results because it only had grade ten as their top grade level. The big school had grade twelve as their highest level. The small school is situated in a remote area far from town whilst the big school is situated in an emerging town. The geographic context and layout of these schools differ the small school is in a place of subsistence and extensive farming whereas the big one is in a

vending, hawking and tourism inclined community because of its proximity to Sodwana Bay.

The sampling employed for parents was convenience sampling, sometimes called availability sampling, of accessible individuals from the target group. Three fathers and three mothers were targeted from each school for the study. Then two teachers from each school (a male and a female) were also targeted and in addition the principals of those schools. Rabbit school had a female principal and Lizard school a male principal. Principals were included because of their dual status as teachers and unit supervisors. Moreover, Epstein (1987) pointed out that while administrative leadership in supporting parent involvement is very important in achieving good results, administrators often leave the selection and use of parent involvement activities to their teaching and support staff. Epstein further explained that 'this lack of active administrative leadership and attention is due, in part, to the dearth of useful, organized information on parent involvement in schools' (1987: 20).

3.3.2 Data collection techniques

Data was collected through individual interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the selected parents, teachers of schools under study, and the two principals. The person-to-person encounter was used, which was directed by the researcher in order to get more information from the respondents (Bodgan and Biklen, in Mthembu, 1999). Document analysis was also used to examine the minutes of meetings for the staff, School Governing Body (SGB) and parents meetings. The focus was on learning from the minutes the type of discussion that the parties normally engage in, as compared to what they brought up during the interviews. The school policies were also examined, to find out whether there was anything pertaining to home-school relations, and what strategies were in place, if any.

A pilot exercise was adopted for this study and yielded a number of positive outcomes. It was evident from the pilot study that the researcher had to use a tape

recorder, which was not initially the intention. However, piloting the study allowed for a re-arranging and restructuring of the interview questions. The researcher was also given the opportunity to experience how to break the ice and overcome her trepidation of conducting interviews. It also became clear that in order to avoid duplication and misinterpretation, the questions would have to be restructured. Sometimes an interviewee directed the scope to a much broader sphere than was anticipated. It was also interesting to learn how different people would react to one aspect or question, as opposed to another.

3.3.3 Interviews

Targeted individuals for interviews were teachers as well as principals and parents. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. All interviews lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes.

3.3.3.1 Parent interviews

Twelve parents from different families irrespective of whether single or from a stable family were participants in this study (six mothers and six fathers). The reasons for this selection were to widen the scope of opinion from the respondents, and also to try to ensure gender representivity. Parent interviews were conducted at different times and dates. Parent interviews took place in their homes, but one parent opted to come to school after hours for his interview. Three parents (two males and one female) were interviewed in the car because we found it difficult to get everybody in their homes to be quiet. Two other parents (mothers) were interviewed in a church where they were actively involved. They chose a day when there were no church activities or services.

Semi-structured interview schedules were used in order to capture as broad a perspective as possible. The interview questions covered personal details and other aspects of the parent-teacher relationship (see appendix A). The interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere and in Zulu, their first language. Parents were probed and encouraged to ask questions whenever they wished. Probing questions

were found to be useful for the researcher. Other techniques used were body language, and allowing silence and time for the respondent to express himself/herself freely.

Data were collected using a tape recorder to avoid time wastage and the inconveniences of having to take notes whilst the interview was being conducted. A tape recorder was used to capture all data correctly and accurately. This enabled the researcher to quote the exact and correct versions directly from the transcripts. Moreover, interpretation of data was strengthened by the use of tapes and transcripts because the scenes were clearly remembered with the body language and sideways comments that were made during the interview process.

3.3.3.2 Teacher interviews

Teachers were also a source of information. The teacher component incorporated principals of schools and two teachers per school.

The intention behind the research was to get the teachers' views on their relationship with parents, and to identify possible strengths and weaknesses of the parent-teacher relationship. Though teachers are educated, the researcher chose to give the teachers the option of using both primary and secondary languages. Semi-structured interviews were designed to elicit information about teachers' engagements and endeavours in working collaboratively with parents (see appendix B and C).

3.3.4 Data analysis

The data had to be managed, analyzed and interpreted. Data was in the form of cassettes, field notes from documents and transcripts. The analysis started by transcribing each respondent's interview individually under the semi-structured interview questions. The responses were dealt with in two separate books as per school. It started with six parents followed by teachers and the principal of each school. A comparison of responses was then made between the twelve parents, four

teachers and two principals of all the schools under study. The tapes were often revisited for making sure that the transcripts maintained the correct version of what was uttered by the respondents. The common elements from the responses became the basis of the themes. The themes were further developed as topics for discussions. Related and relevant information were categorized accordingly. The field notes and documents were compared between the two schools. Some issues were found to be common.

The documents analyzed were the school policies and the minutes of meetings (see appendix D) Document analysis seemed to be a source of concern for the teachers. The researcher therefore had to be patient and kept on respectfully requesting to get those documents for the research to be concluded. However, some of the documents were nowhere to be found. The intention of the researcher was to examine the documents and find out what the normal discussions were, and whether the issue of parent involvement was ever catered for in those discussions. Comparison was made between the documents of the two schools. The researcher also wanted to learn whether there were any strategies in operation for the enhancement of home-school relationships and/or parent-teacher relationships.

3.3.5 Validity and ethical issues

In order to ensure validity and reliability of data collected attempts were made for triangulation of data. Parents, teachers and principals each provided independent but related perspectives on the same issues and thus served as a useful cross checks. The information supplied was compared to documents such as minutes of meetings and school policies.

Conducting the research was not an easy task as it is subject to a number of inconveniences and challenges that are not planned for. It was the case with this research, and some problems were encountered that will be discussed below.

3.4 Problems encountered

A report from the two people who were organising access to parents revealed that it had not been an easy task. Sometimes they had to repeat the process until people were convinced to participate in the research process. A few of the parents reported unforeseen commitments on the day of the research and we had to cancel and re-schedule the appointments. There were also interruptions during interviews. A number of people had cell phones and the researcher found it difficult to request respondents to switch them off during the process of the interview. During one instance whilst we were busy with the respondent, the husband walked in angrily asking for money from the wife who was my respondent. We had to stop the interview until they had settled the problem.

At one stage the appointment was negotiated with the father, but when the researcher visited the home, the father shifted the task to his wife instantly, saying 'my wife knows better when it comes to things pertaining school and children'. It was unexpected, but the interview carried on smoothly with the wife who showed eagerness to participate. In other cases children who were making noise disturbed the interviews and some older people did not take the interviews seriously. They were constantly interrupting the respondents. For some of the respondents daytime was always too busy for them, so appointments were rescheduled to the evening when it was convenient for them.

The time frame was so limited because the researcher is a permanent teacher and a Head of Department as well as a member of the School Management Team (SMT). Fieldwork was scheduled for the three months of June, July and August 2002. It was fine with other respondents, but a few interviews had to be rescheduled and the time extended. The researcher also experienced an exceptional case of one principal (male) who often postponed the appointments until it was finally scheduled for 18 November 2002. Unfortunately it was with regret and sadness that the researcher received a message that a tragedy had befallen her prospective respondent, the principal of Lizard secondary school. He passed away on 14 November 2002. That

necessitated waiting until the situation was settled before approaching the deputy principal. The appointment was postponed to 2003.

Transport problems were also encountered in the initial visit to Rabbit school. The appointment for the initial visit was scheduled for a Thursday afternoon. The researcher began the day at her workplace and was delayed by transport on the way to the Rabbit school. Although the researcher reached her destination a little late, the visit was successful as teachers were still waiting for her arrival.

It was the researcher's experience that one had to be patient in trying to gain the confidence and trust of the respondents before engaging in the actual interview process.

3.5 Conclusion

The problems encountered conclude the chapter after it has presented the methodological aspects of this study, stating all the processes the researcher was engaged with. The following chapter will give a picture of the schools under study and elaborate on other processes so as to assimilate the findings more fruitfully.

Chapter Four

4. Background of schools

4.1 Introduction

The methodological aspects of the study have been dealt with in Chapter Three. This chapter precedes the findings and the analysis that will be dealt with in the following chapter.

It is essential to have an understanding of the backgrounds of the schools that are dealt with in this study. The background of the area was discussed in Chapter One, and a more detailed description of the schools under study follows. In addition, the initial visits will be discussed and the documents and other supporting sources will be dealt with.

4.2 Rabbit secondary school

4.2.1 Milieu

Rabbit secondary school is a public school and caters for Grades 8 to 10. The school was established in 1998, and has been operational for five years. In 2003 it enrolled 212 learners, in 2002 it enrolled 203 learners, and in 2001 it enrolled 188 learners. This secondary school is situated about sixty kilometres from the nearby village of Mkuze.

Rabbit school has one block with three classrooms, with Grades 8, 9 and 10 being allocated one classroom per grade. It is a brick building with plaster and paint. Although the school is small, it is aesthetically pleasing. It is fenced, has gates, and is situated near the main gravel road to Mbazwana. The school was built and fenced using the school fees paid by parents. However, there is neither running water nor piped water in the schoolyard and there are no toilets.

Both learners and teachers carried their own water to school and used the nearby bush as a toilet. There was also no equipment or chairs, furniture or fittings in any of the classrooms, except for the learners' desks and chalkboards.

In addition, there was no administration block, so the principal and teachers used a big tree as their staff room. They only had few schoolbooks, which were kept by one female teacher at her home, in the garage.

There was no electricity in the school, so there were no electrical appliances or equipment such as a fax machine, photocopier, computer, overhead projector and the like. Also, there was no telephone in the school. This was a struggling school in the true sense and undeniably underdeveloped and a good example of being disadvantaged. Vans, buses, and on rare occasions, taxis, were the common mode of transport used. However, most learners walked the few kilometres to school every day because their parents had no money to pay for transport.

The teaching staff at Rabbit school consisted of a female principal, two male and three female teachers, which made a total of six teachers in all. There was neither a deputy principal nor any Heads of Department (HoD). One female and one male teacher worked with the principal as a School Management Team (SMT). All the teachers were qualified for their positions, having acquired at least a minimum of three years training (M+3) or REQV 13. The teaching staff composed of Zulu-speaking people, as were the learners.

The school is built near a primary school that looked good because it was one of those sponsored by the Japanese who had sponsored the building of the classrooms and the erection of the fencing. This neighbouring school was neatly fenced and attractive.

The homes of the learners were mostly built in the bushes in the surrounding area. Although the parent community sent their children to school, there was talk of a high drop out rate apparently due to pregnancy, staying with boyfriends, looking for jobs, etc. Many teachers complained about those learners who had dropped out of school as well as the learners' absenteeism rate.

The school is also a centre for adult education. Parents from different backgrounds attended, and the principal and teachers of Rabbit school were also the teachers of the adult school.

The next section provides an account of the initial visit made to Rabbit school. The initial visit is important because, as the expression goes, first impressions last longest.

4.2.2 Initial visit

After being introduced through letters and telephone calls and especially with the kind assistance of one teacher who made the arrangements for an initial meeting, the researcher then visited the school.

The first meeting was scheduled for one Thursday immediately after the school was closed. After encountering transport problems, the researcher finally arrived at Rabbit secondary school. It was a sunny afternoon and the learners had already left. The researcher was dubious of finding anyone still waiting, despite having reported the delay. There was no sign of anyone. Fortunately, the teachers were having a party and were thus still at school. The researcher shared warm greetings and a few jokes with the teachers. Eventually, the organising lady informally and jovially introduced the researcher to the other staff members. The lady principal invited the researcher to an empty classroom with two other teachers (male and female). In a few minutes all four (the principal, Mrs Nhleko, Mr Ntuli and the researcher) were seated in desks. After a re-introduction and welcoming words from the principal, the meeting commenced.

The teachers could not hide being nervous, as well as being a bit dubious about the intention of the visit. The principal seemed even more hesitant about the whole story. Although it had been explained earlier on that this was in connection with research being conducted, to them it implied a possible investigation of

shortcomings concerning the school, with the intention of reporting them to their superiors.

The researcher again greeted them warmly and distributed the printed agenda that was prepared for the day. The principal was unimpressed and curiously wanted to know the purpose of the research in their particular school. The researcher had to state her case clearly, taking into consideration the ethical issues involved. It appeared from their reaction that their anxiety had been alleviated. Basically the intended agenda clarified the objectives and procedure of the research. The intention of the meeting was also aimed at regaining access to individuals and the school, and to come to a consensus with scheduling tentative dates for the interviews. The researcher had to constantly reaffirm the issues of the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. In the discussion between the respondents and the researcher, the tentative dates for interviews were scheduled for August 2002, after the school vacation in July. It was agreed that the researcher would keep in touch with them. After having settled issues with regards to the purpose, procedure and outcomes of the research, the meeting was adjourned.

Further negotiations were made with one teacher who was going to serve as a mediator and arrange appointments on the researcher's behalf with parents (three mothers and three fathers) who had children in the school registered for that current year. The mediator was a friend and well known to the researcher. A tentative time frame was successfully established for making arrangements with parents. The interviews with parents were scheduled for the first week of the July school holidays. It was agreed that the researcher would make use of the mediator's car to get around. The mediator had the additional responsibility of re-introducing the researcher to individual interviewees on the days of each interview. When the interviewee and the researcher were to be left alone at a convenient time and place (as preferred by the respondent) a re-introduction was deemed necessary. Also an explanation of the purpose of the study and it would also be necessary to re-affirm confidentiality and anonymity.

4.2.3 Description of respondents

A sample of six parents (three mothers and three fathers), and two teachers (male and female) and the principal (female) was selected. A brief description of all the respondents will therefore be given. Children mentioned here were the ones who are registered at Rabbit secondary school and not necessarily the number of children in the family.

4.2.3.1 Parents

1. MaDuma

This is a parent bearing responsibilities of two own children and one extended relative. She was between 31-40 years old. She was a housewife.

2. Mrs Ndimande

This was a parent of three children (two performing poorly at school and the one performing well). She was between 41-50 years old. She was a housewife and earned a living by getting piece jobs with her husband.

3. Mrs Mngomezulu

She had no children of her own but was the guardian of two children. She was between 51-60 years old. She was both a principled woman and a Christian. She loved children and had offered to open a crèche at her residence. She stayed near the church, rendering other services to the church. She had no profession and she said she lived by faith and whatever she could get.

4. Mr Mchunu

This was a parent who had taken upon himself the responsibility of two children (a boy and a girl). He was older than 61 years and a pensioner. These were his late son's children (his grandchildren). He had Christian convictions and taught his children respect and discipline. He was a chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) and concerned about education. He made a living by selling various items.

5. Mr Nhleko

This was a parent who had one child at school. He was between 41-50 years old. He was a parent and a principal of another school. He was a soft man. He showed concern about the manner in which people were struggling in the community. He also shared experiences of his own school where he worked.

6. Mr Ngubane

He was a parent and a guardian to his niece. He was between 31-40 years old. He had a strong voice and was a quick thinker and speaker. He was a working parent concerned about the behaviour of children in modern times.

4.2.3.2 Teachers

1. Mr S.E. Ntuli

He was a male teacher at Rabbit, aged between 21-30 years. He was a dedicated teacher who showed love for teaching and responsibility because he carried support material from his home in Durban to uBombo. He could also negotiate with other teachers in his area, Durban, for ideas and support. He complained strongly about the lack of support from the parents with regards to school activities, especially the learning materials that teachers needed from learners.

2. Mrs. Nhleko

She was a female teacher at Rabbit. She looked soft hearted and a little bit shy and she spoke quietly. She was between 31-40 years old.

3. Miss Nxumalo (Principal)

She was friendly, but was sceptical about the whole research process. However, she was confident and convincing in her responses. She was between 30-40 years old.

4.3 Lizard secondary school

4.3.1 Milieu

Lizard is a public school that caters for learners from Grades 8 to 12 (Matriculation). The school was established in 1974 and has been operational for 28 years. It had an enrolment of 635 learners in 2003, 703 learners in 2002, and the 731 learners in 2001.

The school is situated approximately 85 kilometres from the nearest town of Hluhluwe, and approximately two kilometres from the tarred road that is part of the Lebombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI). The school is also situated in relatively close proximity to the Mbazwana Education Resource Centre (MERC) that is a resource hub for education and a pilot project in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The school is situated in the Mbazwana area that is popular with tourists because of Sodwana Bay.

Lizard school had been laid out in five units with an Administration building. There are toilets, security house, offices and a staff room. The Administration block is equipped with a photocopier, two computers (after the other two had been stolen two weeks prior to the researcher's visit), two overhead projectors, one video machine, cupboards, tables and chairs, desks for learners and a strongroom for schoolbooks and other important material.

The teaching staff at Lizard school consisted of the male principal, a male deputy principal, three Heads of Departments and of the other sixteen teachers of which two were post level one. Out of the twenty-one teachers, twelve were females and nine males. Most teachers had acquired minimum qualification in education, which is M+3 or REQV 13, with the exception of two teachers who had not yet obtained M+3.

4.3.2 Initial visit

At Lizard school the researcher was not familiar with anyone. Consequently the researcher thought it was going to be more difficult to gain access than in Rabbit school. The decision to employ a mediator was opted for after having taken into account the distance from her own area and her unfamiliarity of the location and people connected with Lizard school. Although frequent telephone calls were made to the principal of Lizard school, the mediator played an important role in making arrangements with the respondents. After the necessary arrangements had been made, the school was then visited.

The researcher only had a vague idea about Lizard school, and had only seen the principal from a distance, even though the school was old and well known in the nearby areas. The mediator accompanied the researcher during the first visit to the school. When the researcher and the mediator drove up to the school, they were welcomed at the gate by a security officer. Their attention was drawn to the buildings, as well as the learners and teachers who were constantly moving on the premises and in between the buildings. It was in June 2002, the examinations were in progress.

The mediator and researcher then went to the principal's office. After making the introductions, the mediator left and the principal organised a senior lady teacher to assist the researcher during the visit. Prior negotiations had been made with the two teachers who were expecting the visit despite the fact that it was a very busy time of the year at school. The principal was totally absorbed in his work and was occupied in his office surrounded by a number of teachers. He told the researcher that he was photocopying examination papers for the teachers of neighbouring schools present, and would prefer to have a meeting with the researcher late in that day.

The researcher then made her way to the other two teachers who were waiting outside. Because the offices were hectic, a suggestion was made that the meeting be kept short and held at the back of the administration block. In a few minutes the

three, Mr Sithole, Miss Mtambo and the researcher, were seated on plastic armchairs on the lawn.

The meeting started with a re-introduction from the researcher who then handed each of the prospective respondents a printed agenda for the day. The purpose of the research and the importance of the respondents' contribution were given clarity, together with some issues around the research and the study that was to be undertaken. The research process was negotiated and eventually a consensus was reached for it to be done in August after the July school vacation. Specifically, it was agreed that it would be done in the second week, as the first week was reserved for the Rabbit school interviews. Both teachers were comfortable about being interviewed on a weekend. Teachers even opted to lighten the researcher's burden by offering to be interviewed on the same weekend, although at different times.

The negotiations with the teachers were completed and the researcher had to be patient to see the principal of Lizard school. Finally, the researcher was seated in front of the principal's table explaining the purpose of the visit. Because of the principal's other commitments, it was agreed that the meeting would not be long. It was therefore imperative that all matters regarding the researcher's visit were stated explicitly and succinctly. The principal showed familiarity with research processes and was prepared to give assistance in all possible ways.

In both meetings the ethical dimensions of confidentiality and anonymity were emphasised. A date for the interview with the principal was agreed on when he had no other commitments.

The mediator had to further negotiate access with parents. The mediator was a community member and a respected principal in one of the primary schools in the area. Parents' interviews were negotiated and scheduled for the second week of the July vacation. Similarly, the mediator offered the use of his car and offered his assistance in showing the researcher the place and introducing her to all respondents before any of the interviews was undertaken.

4.3.3 Description of respondents

A sample of six parents (three mothers and three fathers), and two teachers (male and female) and the principal (male) was made. A brief description of all the respondents is given below. Children mentioned in the study were the ones who were registered at Lizard school.

4.3.3.1 Parents

1. MaShongwe

She was a parent with responsibility for two boys (a nephew and a younger brother). She was between 41-50 years old. She had no child of her own. She was a housemother who liked education and was hard-working, disciplined and dedicated. She had a strong conviction that a person has to work hard for a better living. She was confident and spoke loudly.

Her husband was working as an unskilled labourer in Johannesburg. She generated money by selling a certain type of grass called 'incema' for making mats.

2. Mrs Mkhize

She was a parent of one child. She was a busy person who also worked hard for a living. She was between 41-50 years old. She spoke softly but showed conviction and confidence in her responses. She was a housewife who was engaged in making money by engaging in a range of small informal businesses.

3. Mrs Nxumalo

She was the parent of a boy. They ran a tuck shop near the road. She was calm and outspoken. She was a busy person. Over and above the running of the tuck shop, she was also a hawker. Her husband also worked in the same small tuck-shop.

4. Mr Nomandla

He was a grey-haired parent aged 73 years. He was in his second marriage after a divorce and had two children (Sandile and Nelisiwe) at Lizard school. He was a former induna (of Mbila Traditional Authority) for more than twenty-five years. He

had accumulated experience in leadership in different portfolios. He had no profession. He presented a sense of a full and sound mind. He was also a pensioner and his wife made a living by selling raw peanuts, bananas and vegetables.

5. Mr Mthembu

He was the father of her girl Sebenzile. Mr Mthembu was between 51-60 years old. He had accumulated experience working in industries in towns. He had retired early from work. He was somewhat arrogant in his responses, although he had little formal education. He showed strong convictions in what he believed to be right. He was loud spoken, confident, and enthusiastic. He was a member of the Mbila Traditional Authority. In particular, he showed aggression in dealing with issues relating to schools.

6. Mr Zama Ntuli

This was the father of Ziboniso. Mr Ntuli was between 41-50 years old. He was a principal in one of the schools. He was unpretentious and firm, and had a high-ranking status in the community.

He was politically inclined, and tended to be argumentative. He said he was involved in a number of community development projects and expressed much concern with the status of schools in the community. He also shared some of his experiences as a principal and the challenges and difficulties schools are faced with in trying to involve parents.

4.3.3.2 Teachers

1. Miss Mtambo

This was a female teacher aged between 21-30 years. It was not an easy task to learn her character, as she was very cautious at first. However, as the discussion progressed, she came across as being ambivalent. She was not prepared to divulge information about the school until the researcher had done hard work. However, she finally discussed the thorny issues concerning the school.

2. Mr Sithole

This was a male teacher aged between 31-40 years. He was enthusiastic, unreserved, straight talking, courageous, a fast thinker, explicit and outspoken. He presented himself as a person who did not condone evil deeds at school, either from teachers or parents.

3. Mr Khulu (principal)

The late principal was a very talkative and a jovial person. The principal was a loud spoken person and friendly.

4.5 Conclusion

The study has now reached the end of the first four chapters where the background of the whole study, literature review, methodological aspects and the background of the schools as research sites have been explored. In the next chapter the findings will be explored and discussed.

Chapter Five

5. Presentation of Findings

5.1 Introduction

In order to link the data with the environments of the two schools, the background of both schools has been presented in Chapter Four. This background was given to establish the context in which rural schools function. This chapter will then present the findings. The chapter first looks at the types of parental involvement that exist in these schools. Secondly the chapter looks at the nature of the relationship that prevails between parents and teachers in both schools. The manner in which parents and teachers relate are analysed in order to understand the barriers that exist in the parent-teacher relationship. Finally the chapter will be concluded and will lead to Chapter Six.

5.2 What types of parental involvement are there in uBombo?

The categories of parent involvement outlined by Dimock, O'Donogue and Robb (1996) in Feuerstein (2000) in Chapter Two of this study form the basis for the first part of the analysis. This section will relate the findings on parent involvement in Ubombo to these categories.

5.2.1 Choice of school

Choice of schools in rural areas is influenced mainly by the economic status of parents. Poverty proves to be dominant in most rural places like in Ubombo. The mere fact that the learners had to travel long distances to reach schools and others leave homes with empty stomachs shows how the Ubombo area is affected by poverty.

It was evident from the findings that parents often send their children to the nearest schools not always out of their own will, but simply due to financial constraints.

Due to a high percentage of poor parents, their right to choose their schools is undermined and limited by their socio-economic status. Nevertheless, parent's views about schools do play a role. The following are two different views on reasons for choice of schools.

Mrs Ndimande: We send our children to this school because we suffered a lot without a school nearby and finally initiated and paid for the building of this school, and I send all my children to this school. Besides, my husband and I cannot afford to take our children to schools far from our home because it is expensive, moreover we need children to come and do other work at home helping us after school. We only take our children to the other school that is not nearby because of the situation that our school ends with grade ten. That is when our children walk a long distance.

This parent from Rabbit school's choice is determined by proximity. She shows concern about her children having to travel long distances to school. In addition, her choice is also shaped by the fact that the parents initiated and paid for the building of the school and consequently they felt they had to send their children to the school. There is a sense of ownership with this parent.

Mr Zama Ntuli: I was not satisfied with the procedures and management of schools around here so we decided to send our daughter to Nsalamanga high school (a school in a different place to their dwelling place) because the school is still strict and gets good matriculation results.

Mr Ntuli is concerned with the quality of schools and he would prefer taking his child to the school where there is still discipline, a strict principal and acceptable management styles. For him the high schools around his area were undesirable and he was forced to make a choice that he thought was best for his child. This choice is only possible because of Mr Ntuli's capability to overcome the transport problem, and this capability is related to his socio-economic status.

In the interviews with parents it was revealed that the majority of parents could not afford to pay for transport and/or rent and therefore choosing schools far away from their homes was not an option. Many parents could not pay school fees. Therefore, parents' choice of school was limited to neighbouring schools where learners could

walk to schools or sometimes travel economically. However, from the interviews it is clear that if parents had a chance they would prefer sending their children to 'good schools'.

Among the factors considered by parents as attributes of 'good schools' are the following: good matriculation results; acceptable behaviour toward the community in a rural context; good discipline (amongst both learners and teachers); being invited for meetings; effective management with so called 'strict principals'; security in school (meaning a fenced school). Often these factors were assessed purely on the basis of the reputation of the school.

5.2.2 Decision making through formal structures

5.2.2.1 Involvement of parents in decision-making in general

The parent-teacher relationship is influenced by the decisions that take place at schools. There is a range of decisions that are taken at school level. Some parents' views on decision-making were as follows:

Mrs Mngomezulu: I do not know where parents can take decisions because they do not attend meetings and the minority that attends can not know what the majority of parents would say. Even if teachers like to involve parents in taking decisions, unfortunately parents are nowhere to be found.

It is clear that some parents accept responsibility for not being involved in decisions taken at school. However, as can be seen from the following extract, lack of involvement may not simply be due to lack of interest.

Mr Mthembu: Sometimes you feel like a stranger when you visit their schools and even in the meetings they call they just manipulate us. Teachers like to impose. I think teachers should not chair parents' meetings but allow parents to chair the meetings and air their views freely and openly. I do not want to put 'blinkers' on my face and dance for teachers.

It appears that parents are only being partially involved in decision-making, if at all. Teachers are accused of imposing decisions on parents or, in some cases,

influencing them. Parents admitted that it is a common trend that they find their decision-making being influenced by teachers' convictions and beliefs. However, according to the teachers, parents were involved in other decisions taken such as fencing the school and the building of classrooms. They were involved because parents are the main source of income for the school in this context. However the involvement of parents varies from school to school. A teacher from Lizard school revealed the following:

Interviewer: Are you actively involving parents in decision-making at your school?

Mr Sithole: Not at all, even with us as teachers, the thing is, we hold meetings and come up with resolutions and ideas, then finally the School Management Team (SMT) implement their own ideas. Shared decision-making and decentralisation is not commonly employed in this school.

It seemed common practice that parents' participation in decision-making was limited. In addition, some teachers feel that parents are left out of decision-making in schools. Moreover, even in the school policies and minutes of meetings, little in Rabbit school and nothing in Lizard school was said about involving parents.

5.2.2.2 Decision making in the School Governing Body (SGB)

Teachers interviewed felt differently about being involved with the SGB. None of the teachers interviewed were members of the SGB. Some teachers indicated that they would appreciate being members. Those who preferred being involved gave reasons related to being involved in the success of the school. They would also like to come with suggestions for building the future of learners. Those who would not appreciate being members, had reasons such as this:

Mr Sithole: I would rather distance myself from the SGB because some bad things are promoted.

Interviewer: Why do you feel like that?

Mr Sithole: If your problems were left unresolved in a school having the SGB and the School Management Team (SMT) you end up saying, let me go and teach and do my work.

Seemingly, some teachers lose hope in the SGB when they realize that their problems are left unattended. This raises the issue of the culture of the school's problem solving and management style.

On the other hand parents expressions were like this:

MaShongwe: Mh... I cannot deceive you I am no longer prepared to serve in the SGB it took all of my time. I cannot cope now I have a lot of work to do, as you are here yourself you are wasting some of my time. That thing is frustrating I can remember we were frustrated by these teachers interviews we were engaged in. It was indeed a taxing exercise consuming all of my time and energy.

MaDuma: I have never been involved and I do not think I would like to be involved at all. I am fine being just a parent and nothing more than that. To be honest I cannot afford working in the SGB.

Mr Nomandla: I do not like to be involved in anything I have worked a lot and I am now old.

Involvement of parents in the SGB was perceived as resulting in more work, time-consumption and frustration. Older parents felt that their age precluded their involvement whilst others indicated that they had served as members of the SGB for a long time previously and had lost interest.

5.2.2.3 Decision making in extra-curricular activities

Both schools had extra-curricular activities ranging from sports such as soccer and netball, to cultural activities. This statement by a teacher sums up the parents' contribution to those activities:

Mr Ntuli: We do not involve parents in extra-curricular activities except only when they have to pay...we need money from them to support our sports or when learners are going out for a trip.

Teachers at both schools confessed that parents were not involved in extra-curricular activities except when teachers have to ask for money and, by so doing, parents do not feel that they are part and parcel of the school, but see themselves as

strangers and money suppliers. Lack of involvement by parents was viewed as a problem by some of the parents:

Mrs Nxumalo: It is a good idea that we are involved so that we also see that our children are safe and also to give support to our children and cheer them up and just to feel we are part of the school.

Mr Zama Ntuli: At least if they could let us have a word also in what types of activities we would appreciate our learners to be exposed to. You know in our schools here when they talk about extra-curricula activities they mean soccer and netball whereas our learners are not exposed to a number of other activities on which they can even make living. Some parents could teach other extra-curricula activities.

Seemingly parents believe they could have a significant input in extra-curricula activities. Indeed some parents can even teach learners other activities they know. Parents are willing to participate in their children's education. Neither the school policies nor minutes of meeting did mention a thing about involving parents in extra-curricula activities.

5.2.3 Involvement in teaching and learning

5.2.3.1 In the classroom

Not surprisingly, within the classroom environment, where the primary activity is that of teaching, the teachers were dominant since they had the necessary expertise. Although teachers admitted that parents could contribute indirectly to the learners' ability to learn in the classrooms, the education level of parents was mentioned as a factor that accounted for the contribution in the classroom being so limited. Therefore, because of the low level of education of the majority of parents, parents were passive in their role in the classroom. Parents appeared to lack even the faintest idea of what and how they could contribute in the classroom situation. Even the respondents who were educated expressed uneasiness in helping in classrooms - viewing it as undermining the role of the teachers in that particular school:

Mrs Nxumalo: Eh...what do you think my child, some or most of parents are not educated or have little education exposure. I think we can just encourage children to study and check homework and leave the other things to teachers who know what to do.

Atkin and Bastiani's assertion that, 'parents do not have a well defined picture of themselves as 'educators' and are largely unconscious of the skills and expertise they possess in the area' (1988) seems to be borne out by the evidence. Even so, it was found that some parents were open to the possibility of helping children in the classroom provided there was thorough preparation and negotiations beforehand and the parent is confident enough to do so.

Mr Ngubane: If we have to be involved in the classroom and teach, thorough preparations have to be made. It can be possible only if it is well prepared for.

5.2.3.2. Out of the classroom

There were a number of out of classroom activities that parents suggested would be part of their responsibilities. Parents referred to the following factors as their responsibilities outside the classroom:

- Co-operating with teachers
- Voluntary visits to check and discuss learner's work with teachers
- Developing (in conjunction with teachers) a code of conduct for learners
- Communicating with teachers
- Providing safety and security at schools
- Developing and agreeing on a dress code for both learners and teachers
- Informing the school about the physical, psychological and health status of their children

Parents know some of the roles they have to play, as these responses closely match the policy intentions. But in reality parents are not fulfilling the obligations of their roles. From the interviews it emerged that parents do not co-operate with teachers and do not pay voluntary visits to schools to discuss children's performance. Moreover, parents admitted that they rarely communicated with teachers or informed them about the physical, psychological and health status of their children. Parents admitted that they do not make any attempt to provide safety and security in schools. Both schools reported theft problems by community members. Seemingly,

there is no correlation between the imagined ideal type of a parent and the real parent. The ideal roles of parents are far removed from the real roles played by parents in schools.

5.2.3.3 At home

Parents knew that they had responsibilities to accomplish at home with their children. The following is a list of duties they ascribed to themselves:

- Encouraging and ensuring that their children attend school everyday
- Checking and monitoring learner's work
- Inculcating good morals and behaviour in their children
- Discussing behaviour problems and challenges with their children
- Affording learners with study time
- An obligation to pay school fees for their children,
- Buying school uniform and other learning material for their children
- Attending meetings at the invitation of the school.

In spite of parents' knowledge, however, Watkins asserts that, 'parents with less education have been less likely to help their child at home.' Watkins further elaborated that, 'parents with less education may be frustrated because they want to help their child but do not have the skills they deem necessary to be effective' (1997; p4).

Parents admitted that their level of education interfered greatly with their interest to help their children because they felt inferior and hopeless. More surprisingly the educated parents also seemed more committed to the demands and challenges of their work, to the extent that they also made little contribution to help their children. A teacher raised the following concern:

Miss Mtambo: Learners behaviour is not good. We are near 'shebeens' here and learners are tempted to consume liquor during school hours. But parents have powers to deal with the community member(s) who sell liquor to children during school hours because they are known and are part of the community.

In spite of what parents believe to be their roles, teachers on the other hand expect parents to assist in eradicating the evils that prevail in the community as they affect the education of learners negatively. Such interventions demand collaborative efforts within the community and an understanding of the value of the children's education over personal wealth.

Parents conceded that although they sometimes afforded their children time for studies, paid school fees, bought school uniform, and provided the basic needs such as food and shelter for their children, they were tempted to leave the rest up to the teachers.

5.2.4 Effect on the physical and material environment

5.2.4.1 Parent support in schools

Parents and teachers of both schools confirmed that there was very little or no voluntary support from parents to schools. Parents seem to be uncertain about the need for voluntary support in schools. According to the researchers' description, voluntary support here means physical, material, financial, moral and even mental support. Parents seemed to lack the 'know how' to offer voluntary support to schools. According to Hornby (2000), parent support should be utilised by teachers to strengthen parent-teacher relationships.

Teachers reported some elements of theft at schools that shows that schools lack parents' support in ensuring safety and security in schools and also ensuring that the school environment is conducive to teaching and learning. However, the study detected that parents in rural schools are the main sources of finance at school and that they go to an extent of building schools. It was evident that schools in rural areas are mainly built by parents through school fees that they pay each year. In addition, teachers at Lizard school reported that one parent donated soccer attire for the school and they appreciated it as it was rarely done or even the first of its kind.

5.2.5 Communication

5.2.5.1 Meetings and school visits as factors in the parent-teacher communication

According to Sergiovanni (1987) Good communication in education is vital, not simply because it is a complex and multifaceted process, but because it occupies so central a role in both teaching and learning processes.

Parents admitted that schools did invite parents to a maximum number of four-scheduled meetings per year, or in emergency as necessity arose. The study revealed that parents were at times reluctant to attend meetings, but also felt schools did not take their constraints into account and did not provide sufficient notice.

Mr Nomandla: Yes, I can say we are seldom invited, maybe three to four times a year. I sometimes attend and sometimes not, but I do not remember being invited recently.

Interviewer: But how do you respond to those invitations?

Mr Nomandla: There is a problem here of not attending which sometimes lies with teachers who give us short notice for meetings disregarding the fact that we have other commitments and plans which were pre-planned. Sometimes they say a meeting tomorrow, I feel we must be informed in time through good and reliable channels for disseminating information. They forget that we also plan as much as they do.

Dean (2000) asserts that communication appropriacy is the key element since good communicators send messages in the most effective manner and at the most appropriate time. However, teachers were viewed as lacking communication skills of effective manner and appropriate time.

Generally, the interviews revealed that there was poor co-operation between parents and teachers with regard to the education of their learners. Teachers consistently complained about challenges they were given by parents. The following quote illustrates this:

Mr Sithole: It is undoubtedly true that parents are giving us a great challenge. They are very reluctant in co-operating with us. I mean responding to invitations that we send. It is surprising that even if I invite a particular parent for that child s/he does not come let alone giving a response or apologising they cannot do it.

According to the teachers, meetings were basically called in connection with the running of the school, budget, learner performance, and financial matters. The teachers main concern was that parents were reluctant to attend meetings and that even if invited specifically for individual learners, some parents would still disregard the invitations. The School Governing Bodies (SGB), principals and teachers and other stakeholders mostly depend on meetings to discuss school matters and to try to solve issues of each school. So active participation in those meetings would potentially alleviate problems and, hopefully result in the smooth running of the school where parents are part and parcel of the education of their children.

Deducing from their responses it appeared that parents' ambivalence emanated from conflicting interests about the aim of meetings. Some parents were not prominent figures in the community and felt uneasy to air their views and suggestions.

MaDuma: I and my husband, come from Magudu at Pongola so when you raise a point people here will consider who are you? For how long have you lived in the area? To be heard you must be somebody. Another thing I do not think it is fair that teachers always call meetings for financial support or for the misbehaviour of our children. Why can't teachers call us for other things not related with money and the bad behaviour at school. May be they must try other means but well I do attend if I am not busy.

If a question such as this would be asked, 'Why do teachers or the school have to invite parents for meetings?' Then the following findings were deduced from the parents' responses. Parents viewed meetings as the teachers' vehicles for delivering their intentions, views and/or demands and expectations from the parents. It is in these meetings that school policy, school improvement, progress, learner problems and behaviour, school buildings, learners' results, planning for school and general issues, reports on school activities and development, were communicated to parents. Reports on school trips and/or excursions were also given to parents. Meetings in these schools were also viewed as a platform for a number of issues to be raised. Some of these issues were also written in the school minute book.

Parents' interests in meetings had to do more specifically with learner academic outcomes, i.e. whether learners pass or fail, and not so much on their progress during the year. On the other hand, teachers' interests came across as being confined to the financial support of parents in the form of school fees, for the smooth running of the school. Moreover, the teachers also focused their interest on learner academic performance and the need for parent support in the education of the learners. These two different perspectives, as well as other factors, impact on the parent-teacher relationship.

The end of this section on types of involvement that prevail in uBombo lead to the next section on looking at the nature of the relationship that parents and teachers have.

5.3 What is the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers in Ubombo?

The nature of the relationship between parents and teachers in Ubombo is drawn from Badenhorst (1993).

5.3.1 Mutual trust, understanding, acceptance and solidarity:

The ideal parent-teacher relationship would be a planned relationship of which the basis is a mutual commitment to working together effectively towards achieving goals. However, the interviews revealed that the parents have very little contact and, consequently, very little knowledge of the teachers. Some parents only knew one or two teachers, whilst others did not even know one teacher.

Parents were distanced from teachers for a number of other reasons. In particular the parents found that the teachers were inaccessible, aloof, reserved and unfriendly. The teachers held a very different viewpoint of the parent-teacher relationship. They saw the gap in the level of education between the majority of teachers and parents as being one factor influencing the parent-teacher relationship.

According to parents, teachers even differed from them socially, mentally and spiritually. Thus, the parent-teacher relationship was marked predominantly by negative views of each other, in particular: parents' negligence, reluctance and being distanced from school; parents viewing school as a different and isolated entity; a lack of, or poor communication between home and school. Also an element of distrust that sometimes prevails between parents and teachers because of the discrepancy between the theory and practice of governmental regulations and laws with their implications for schools, which have an impact on the parent-teacher relationship.

Seemingly there is a gap that results in a hidden conflict that stems from how parents believe teachers should present themselves and behave, and how teachers believe they should present themselves and behave. Therefore, poor parent-teacher relationships are sometimes inadvertently perpetuated by the behaviour of teachers. Parents also have conflicting interpretations of teachers' actions that may sometimes be positive or sometimes negative, detrimental or harmless, to the education of their children. How parents envisage the ideal teacher is sometimes influenced by the preconceived ideas that parents have of what they call a 'good' teacher. It is what parents bring to the relationship that influences the thinking of parents. Parents bring to the relationship the knowledge of their own teachers and expect these teachers to behave and look like theirs in their times.

Mr Mithembu: Have you seen how teachers dress? You find a teacher in jeans and T-shirts at school that do not give them the dignity they deserve. In the olden days one could not see a teacher smoking in public or in school premises as it happens nowadays. My little mind tells me that the behaviour of teachers has an influence on the teaching and learning process and in our relationship. Furthermore, our problem with teachers is also perpetuated by the human rights issues that we do not know exactly. We are always cautioned not to infringe...not infringing other people's rights.

Moreover, the parent-teacher relationship appears to be influenced by teacher-teacher relationships. The relationship between the teachers and the management within the school showed some elements of having deteriorated to the point where it yielded negative attitudes. One of the discussions with a teacher also revealed other issues around communicating with parents.

Mr Sithole: Let me confess this, I once reported the child's behaviour to a parent of the child and surprisingly the response was, I was demanded or commanded to leave the child alone because we teachers were said to also have our own crooked ways.

Interviewer: But how is your relationship with parents now?

Mr Sithole: The thing is we are so reluctant to communicate with parents or to invite them to school because there seems to be conflict between teachers and these parents.

Interviewer: How do you work then? Do you think you still need those parents?

Mr Sithole: Definitely, it is just that female parents of this area are unfair they seem to overprotect their children but the main issue behind this problem is the alleged sexual relationships between teachers and learners. In a meeting held two years back, parents confronted teachers with a number of misbehaviour matters, the worst of all was that teachers were sexually related with children and children were in the meeting supporting parents, pointing fingers at teachers. Mh! It was havoc. The main problem is that this habit did not cease.

It is evident from the discussion that the behaviour of teachers impacts negatively on the parent-teacher relationship. Furthermore, it was said that teachers that were concerned with this problem did not receive support from their management, and this has had long-term effects on the relationship between parents and teachers:

Interviewer: As a subject and a class teacher do you ever think of inviting parents for specific needs?

Mr Sithole: (forcefully) I do not invite parents because when I first came to this school I found a lot of problems of which most teachers are familiar with and know them but neither of them bothered themselves. Even if I report a number of cases to the Head of Department's (HoDs) that needs attention they neglect and overlook the case.

The two schools may not experience similar problems. Lizard school had serious problems with parent-teacher relationships - the situation was not normal at all. The anger expressed by the teacher in the extract was enough to tell the story about the parent-teacher relationships at Lizard school. Even the matriculation results were deteriorating and the teacher respondents were very upset.

Interviewer: In trying to get things normal what are you doing as teachers of Lizard school?

Mr Sithole: Well, at the moment we are allowing time for the 'heat to cool' because they have already tried meetings with parents and learners

and the traditional authority intervened but all was in vain it really did not work positively. (After a pause, he continued) Yes, we are just letting things normalise and we will hopefully revitalise our relationship with parents.

Inferring from this case the behaviour of the teachers impact on the relationship with both parents and learners. The uncertainty of the relationship seemed more serious at Lizard school than at Rabbit school because at Lizard both parents and teachers had experienced a situation where there were allegations that teachers were involved in sexual relationships with learners

Interviewer: So what is the way forward now, how do you associate with parents as a school?

Mr Sithole: It is difficult even now, since then, to invite parents to school because parents and children unite when it comes to blaming teachers and they speak the same language.

Interviewer: I see but do you as teachers see any need of these parents?

Mr Sithole: Yes, more than before, we do need parents and their support greatly, things will work out. Yes hopefully things will work out, because if you ask learners for a mere R1.00 for fundraising and parents pay, it means there is a potential willing parent out there.

Given such a scenario it may not be simple to rectify the situation. However, it is clear that teachers also want things to work well with parents and they have not completely lost hope in the potential of positive aspects of their relationship with the parents. Teachers in this study seem to have a strong desire to regain the parents' trust and to form a sound relationship with them, despite their suspicions and misgivings. One is not surprised that Swap argued that relationships between home and school are based on mutual respect, and both parents and teachers should be seen as experts and resources in this process of discovery (1993: p39).

It also emanated from this study that parents and teachers need each other and feel that there is no proper progress in their children's education without them joining hands. The study revealed that though both parties are interested to work together and relate positively, there are social tensions, factors and conflicts that are a barrier in their relationship (see also Kindred et al, 1990).

It was clearly stated that parents depend on the management of the school for being involved as full participants in the education of their children. To add to that, teachers who are not in the school management team also depend on the school management team for strategizing parent-teacher relationships. Therefore, it shows that “it is essential for the management of the school that those who are charged with the responsibility for directing its affairs, understand the role of public attitudes in a democracy and their effect on the education of children’ (Kindred et al, 1990).

5.3.2 Parent-Teacher Healthy Openness and Communication

Parent-teacher openness is a reciprocal process and related to a number of factors. Factors that emerged from the interviews, which hinder parent-teacher healthy openness, were fear, a sense of inferiority, pride, mistrust, misconstrued behaviour and preconceptions or attitudes. The interviews showed that some teachers, as well as some parents either feel inferior or that they are being undermined, and this is not a suitable basis for interacting. Also, sometimes there is a lack of transparency between the SGB and parents and between teachers and parents. Parents and teachers are unfamiliar with each other, which in itself perpetuates tensions.

Some other issues are revealed in expressions such as:

Interviewer: Do you have reasons for not participating in the school of your child?

Mrs Nxumalo: Sometimes you abstain from school and its activities to avoid conflict with teachers.

Interviewer: In what sense do you experience conflict with teachers?

Mrs Nxumalo: Like when there is something wrong that pertains the teacher, may be with your child and you feel it is safer not to address the matter and cause trouble.

It makes it more difficult when parents visit schools mostly when they have conflicting ideas with teachers. Some parents do not want any form of conflict and would rather not be involved than to deal with conflictual relations. The following reveals how some of the parents feel about their involvement in schools. However, in this case the respondent was sharing his personal experience as a member of the traditional authority.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your involvement in schools as parents?

Mr Mthembu: Teachers feel the school is their territory and we are foreigners and strangers in their land. I feel that the traditional authorities should be allowed to intervene in schools not being shuttered by teachers. Schools in rural areas also belong to the traditional authorities we cannot sit back when our children are failing like this at Lizard.

There is a feeling of uneasiness between the two parties and a fear of encroaching into the other person's territory as said by Mr Mthembu.

Parents view the school as theirs but felt excluded. Parents valued the intervention of traditional authorities in schools. However, it was said that the traditional authorities once tried to intervene at Lizard school and the intervention was unsuccessful. It was further reported that teachers clashed with traditional authorities and felt invaded and deprived of their rights as professionals. Teachers at Lizard school felt the intervention of traditional authorities was encroaching on their territory and eventually the intervention led to confusion and misunderstanding. The traditional authorities in this case abstained from trying to help schools.

5.3.3 Mutual respect, consideration, loyalty and cordial co-operation

At Rabbit school respect between parents and teachers was reasonably good. However, there was poor co-operation between parents and teachers.

MaDuma: We have no problem with respect it is humane so we do respect our teachers as they do. It is just that we are sometimes unable to meet their demands.

However, it differed at Lizard school because though parents and teachers claimed to have respect for each other it constantly came out that they had a terrible experience in a meeting that ended in a very demoralising state. That status led to less consideration of each other and therefore lack of full co-operation between parents and teachers. Nevertheless, there was common hope that improvement was possible.

Miss Mtambo: Well respect is not a big problem, but if the community does not give us due respect it would be from our own making as teachers. In any way we do respect parents and they also do to a certain extent it is just that emotions take people out of their way. We have one hope that because we need each other things will not remain like this, they will get back to normal.

5.3.4 Understanding of the specific task of other party and equivalence in spite of their differences:

5.3.4.1 Teachers' roles in children's education

Mrs Ndimande: In my own opinion, Teachers are responsible for good teaching and controlling children.

Teachers, like parents, have roles to play in the education process. Parents insisted on the teachers showing the appropriate care and attention for the children. Teachers were viewed as marshals of goodness. It was said that children spend most of their time with the teachers and if they do not receive care and attention from teachers then they lose confidence, self-esteem and feel like outcasts. From the interviews, parents viewed the following as being the roles of teachers:

- Teaching effectively
- Moulding children's behaviour
- Organising vacation teaching, which is winter schooling, especially for the higher classes including Grade Twelve
- Building positive relationships with parents and learners
- Encouraging and attracting parents to school
- Informing parents about curriculum changes
- Informing parents about children's progress and problems
- Attending community activities when time avails itself to them
- Visiting some children's homes if possible
- Scheduling and conducting meetings effectively

- Motivating learners for education by organising speech days where they wear academic gowns
- Informing parents about rules and regulations

Interestingly, parents attributed roles to teachers that concur with what is laid down by the Government Gazette and other documents from the Department of Education.

Communication and information are key components of the roles identified by parents. For example:

Mrs Mkhize: According to my understanding teachers are suppose to make good relations with us, in fact they are suppose to talk to us as parents.

In addition, parents located the responsibility for initiating the relationship with teachers.

Mrs Mngomezulu: We do not understand the changes in the manner teachers teach we just overhear from our children, why can't the teachers tell us what is going on with these new changes? Teachers must not possess education, even if we are uneducated they are supposed to simplify everything for us.

Parents also showed concern about teachers who do not carefully explain the curriculum changes and the roles of parents in the newly adopted curriculum and its dimensions. Teachers are blamed for incompetence in disseminating information and involving parents as partners in education.

Mr Ntuli: Our community is really illiterate and semi-illiterate and they hardly understand the educational processes. Really our communities are still left behind in many things. So even the relationship is really very uneven between us as teachers and parents.

It seems that parents see their own lack of education as a barrier to initiating the relationship with teachers. The parents thus looked to the teachers to provide the impetus, but felt that teachers were not doing enough. This implies that teachers

therefore have to attract parents to school and encourage parents to participate in the children's education and attend parents' meetings. As teachers were greatly concerned about parents' reluctance in attending parents meetings, parents also were concerned about the whole staff of teachers attending parents' meetings because they were eager to discuss issues with teachers but only teachers serving on the SGB attended parents' meetings.

In one discussion the following sentiment was expressed:

Mr Mchunu: It is surprising in its own that teachers do not attend parents meetings. We are trying to help these people by trying to negotiate with parents and they are always not there except one or two, those who are members of the SGB. We need all teachers in our meetings, otherwise who are we working for? When are these teachers going to communicate with parents and just to know them better?

According to Swap (1993) teachers should be entrusted with the responsibility to communicate with parents so as to keep them informed about their children's progress, school policies and programs, and opportunities for parent involvement. It seems as though in uBombo this is not an understanding shared by the teachers themselves.

5.4 Barriers to the parent-teacher relationship in Ubombo

Teachers and parents in both schools were convinced that their relationship with the other was poor. Some individuals even referred to it as being far below their expectations. An encouraging aspect of their admission was that both parties recognised that it was not what it could be, meaning that there was a common basis for improvement. However, aside from that minor aspect of encouragement, parent involvement at school and their relationship with the teachers is undeniably kept to a minimum and what there is of it is of a poor standard. Both parties are equally honest in recognising this larger aspect of concern. 'One must conclude that there must be serious and powerful barriers that inhibit teachers in reaching out to parents and parents in coming closer to teachers.' (Swap, 1993).

Despite the fact that parents have a potential will to relate well with teachers, that will still has to overcome the social barriers such as the lack and/or low level of parent education, the parents' attitudes and the economic barriers such as unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, unfavourable work conditions, scarcity of transport and distance from the school (Ngwenya, 1996). The barriers to positive parent-teacher relationship were as follows:

5.4.1 Education Level of Parents

Parents said that they themselves had had no or very little formal education. Education, especially in rural areas, is associated with status and wealth. It was evident that parents with low status and who struggled with poverty viewed themselves as less important in all spheres of educational life. The complexities of the education being taught to their children were sometimes hard for the parents to comprehend.

Some of the respondent's expressions revealed information on other factors impacting on parent-teacher relationship. For example:

Interviewer: In your opinion how much can parents do to influence teaching and learning?

Mr Nomandla: Yes...because the level of education of parents is so low there is not much parents can do but they can check written work, ask questions, sort the problem of learners travelling long distances to school.

According to parents, their level of education had to an essential consideration if one is to be effectively playing an important role in the education of today's children. Therefore, the mere fact that some parents in rural spheres have only rudimentary education, or are illiterate, seriously hampers their will to participate in their children's education.

5.4.2 Socio-economic Background

Most parents are unemployed and suffer the effects of poverty. Living mostly depends on selling, seasonal jobs and unskilled labour. This state of affairs has resulted in learners having to travel long distances to school. There are many occasions when there is no money for transport. Some learners even go to school with empty stomachs.

One parent confirmed this by revealing that one child in their school fainted and it was discovered that she was hungry because had had insufficient supper the previous day and no breakfast that morning. Other parents too raised similar concerns of children starving and/or not having enough food.

Because of this level of poverty, parents are unable to cater for all the financial needs of their children. It is not an exaggeration that the poverty in these rural areas is of such a magnitude that, for the most part, the communities barely manage to get their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. There is little or nothing left over for anything else.

This status quo raises questions about the low participation of parents in their children's education. Children suffer the consequences of their parents because the parents struggle to survive on a daily basis and do not have the capacity to invest time and resources in their children's education.

5.4.3 Children's Behaviour and Achievement

It was found that the children's behaviour is a stumbling block to the parent-teacher relationship. There were many complaints about the children's behaviour during the interviews. The parents appeared to be concerned about the changes in the lives of their children that were completely unlike the past. For example, in the past children did not have rights and used to take instructions from their parents and they would do as they were told to. In the modern world even rural children showed a tendency to question their parents and teachers. This breakaway from the traditional role impacted on both teachers' and parents' attitudes towards them. Therefore,

inevitably the parents' and teachers' discussion about learners revolved around the children's questionable behaviour, and this focused the interactions on matters of conflict.

The behaviour of the children constantly emerged from data as impacting on parent-teacher, parent-child and teacher-child relationships. Amongst other examples of the children's misbehaviour, the teachers mentioned some that were of particular concern to them. These were the tendency of children to drop out of school without any reports from parents, the use of vulgar language at school, being unruly, sexual promiscuity, and having intimate relationships with teachers. It must be constantly kept in mind that because their parents are living in poverty and hardships, the learners are also struggling to live and are themselves victims of their home environments. Atkin and Bastiani (1988) argue that the lifestyle at home impacts on the education of the child.

Watkins argues that 'child achievement is now recognised as a key factor that can encourage parent involvement' (1997, p4). The findings of this research would seem to support Watkins's point in the sense that parents revealed that they are encouraged by their children's good academic performance at school. Some parents even opted to give support to those children who showed that they were doing well at school, whilst neglecting the under-achievers.

5.4.4 Educational Policy Processes

It was repeatedly mentioned in this study that government regulations and policies, as well as media reports, impacted on the parent-teacher relationship.

Regulations have unrealistically stated that schools belong to communities and that parent communities have influential powers that they can exercise in their children's schools. However, the government lays down stipulations on very sensitive issues, such as corporal punishment, paying of school fees, pregnancies and the parents' role in education. From the interview transcripts it is evident that the parents have a concern as to what is actually left for them to decide on, and there is a feeling that

the Government intervention in all aspects of their children's schooling is an invasion of their rights as a parent.

Across the spectrum of South African education, the parents and children come from different communities, backgrounds and cultures. They also have different norms and values. Moreover, parents in the uBombo communities believed that they had a right, if not a duty, to socialise their children the way they feel is proper. For them it is therefore difficult to comprehend a universal governmental intervention through school regulations that are meant to regulate children's rights equally throughout the country. Parents feel it is unethical for the Government to have caused such misunderstandings and confusion in schools. In effect, there is a clash between the good intentions of First World ideals and Third World traditionalism.

Such a state of affairs brought about conflict and controversy between policy and practice in schools. It was evident that some schools were still administering corporal punishment. Also school fees were still enforced through a number of actions taken by schools. Pregnancies were also treated the way parents and the SGB felt was humanly and socially acceptable. It was also evident from the interviews that parents in the school meetings were sometimes divided, because there were those who wanted to put government regulations into practice and others not at all.

Moreover, the parents felt that Government was over-emphasising the children's rights at the expense of the rights of parents and teachers. Parents stated that, in fact, it was unclear to the point of confusion as to what the rights of parents and teachers were.

5.5 Differences between the two schools

5.5.1 Specific differences between Rabbit and Lizard

5.5.1.1 Rabbit

Teachers at Rabbit seemed to have no behaviour problems. Rabbit was a small school headed by a female principal and with few teachers. Both teachers and parents did not talk ill about teachers. The interviewees reported that teachers were dedicated to their work. Teachers were enthusiastic and disciplined. Parents affirmed that teachers were helpful in the community they attended funerals and gave assistance where they possible could. Other parents reported that teachers once donated to a family that was very poor and buried their loved one and the act was greatly acknowledged by the community. One child suffered from malnutrition and one of the teachers volunteered to feed the child for one year out of her own expenses, and the child recovered. Another case was that of a teacher who bought shoes for a poor learner. Also there is one female teacher who has taken guardianship of one of the poor boys, taking full responsibility for the child. Also parents admitted that teachers played an important role in calming down the unruly behaviour of their children.

Teachers were also praised for helping learners who get sick or have to be transported to the hospital by using their cars. Three teachers have cars (two females and one male). Data revealed that there were no specific behaviour problems among teachers at Rabbit. The findings revealed that there was no tension between parents and teachers, because both teachers and parents could justify the poor participation of parents as emanating from ignorance, poverty, negligence, reluctance, disempowerment, level of education, commitments, etc. The principal was hoping to organise an education awareness day for parents. She would donate some money out of her pocket to cater for refreshments. She said that "We are trying to get parents to the school and I hope it will work." On this particular day learners were expected to perform various activities.

5.5.1.2 Lizard

Teachers at this school were confessing evil things done by teachers and the teachers I happened to interview expressed dissatisfaction in the way other teachers behaved and also even criticised the principal for being too jovial and over-lenient with learners. Teachers expressed feelings of dissatisfaction about the manner in which the school as such was managed that has serious implications for teaching and learning. The other teacher was literally complaining and also blaming the Heads of Departments and even the management style adopted in the school for not addressing important issues that tampered with teaching and learning and their relationship with parents.

Parents on the other hand were also not satisfied about the behaviour of teachers and how teachers dressed and behaved and more especially about the academic achievement of their children. A striking difference was, revealed by a furious Mr Sithole, who openly accused teachers for being sexually involved with learners. Parents were also not impressed with the school management strategies and another parent was open enough to spell out that the principal needed a substitute. However the very same principal was praised for attending funerals and other important social gatherings. It came out from discussion with parents that the school had encountered serious management problems and was totally out of hand. It was revealed that the traditional authority intervened greatly but was pushed out of the school by teachers who claimed that the school was their territory and felt the intervention was an intrusion and an infringement of some of their rights. The magnitude of the problem of parents distancing themselves from the school seemed to be more significant. Both teachers and parents admitted that they need each other but it would take some time to be at ease.

5.6 Principals' concerns

The main concern of principals was that schools were not functioning the way they should be. The main concern was that of parents failing to turn up in their numbers for meetings called at school. Both principals wanted to join hands with parents and

to improve management of the school. Principals were blaming parents for being aloof from the school; nevertheless, principals were able to blame themselves too for not going an extra mile in ensuring that parents are involved in schools.

The following extracts illustrate this:

Miss Nxumalo: I do understand that we are facing poor co-operation and participation of parents in our schools but, though parents are creating problems for us but I blame them because most do not know how to be involved. My main concern is that even when we invite them for meetings to inform them about the progress of the school they still fail to co-operate. There is also a lack of teacher initiative in attracting those parents out there to our schools.

Mr Mnguni: Yes, The truth is we are having problems in involving parents which might emanate from misunderstanding and poor communication from teachers or the school per se. We are indeed experiencing problems in this school which involve things like: parents distancing themselves from the school, poor co-operation between parents and teachers, learner absenteeism, learners absconding during school hours, theft directed to the school from community members. There are so many things involved.

Researcher: What more can you say about school policies and may be the way forward.

Miss Nxumalo: It is true that policies were made however the functioning of these policies is not to the maximum because little is implemented. Nevertheless we cannot throw in the towel. For instance I have a plan for this year seeing that we are struggling to draw parents closer I am planning to have a big parents' day, on this day learners will perform different activities. I also want some cooking to take place. I will use my own money for that. In fact I just want to make this as a trial of whether parents can participate or not. In that gathering there will be a formal session preceding the informal one where I will together with the School Governing Body (SGB) address those parents on almost all matters pertaining the school and their children. I am still planning the day.

Mr Mnguni: To tell the truth the school policy was long drafted but even today they are still drafts. The problem is that we as a school are not prepared to implement any of those without the consent of parents. Concerning our relationship with parents we have established a teacher task team with a delegated responsibility of bringing about good parent-teacher relationships. We hope for positive results but we will see how it goes. The task team is expected to report to the School Management Team (SMT)

Both principals were positive in that they are struggling to maximise parents' involvement in their schools for support. It also came from the discussions with principals that they are aware of the problems surrounding their schools.

5.7 Conclusion

Chapter Five has presented the findings on both the perceptions of parents and of teachers. Upon closer examination the findings showed us that both schools are experiencing problems of poor parent-teacher relationships, although the factors leading to the situation have different origins. Nevertheless, both schools were positive that the parent-teacher relationship could be positively re-established. Therefore the factors that are important according to teachers and parents, to enhance parent-teacher relationships will be dealt with as recommendations after conclusions made in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five has dealt with the presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings with regards to the parent-teacher relationship in the case study. Themes have emerged relevant to the context of rural Black community schools in uBombo circuit. This chapter will therefore draw conclusions from the findings and make recommendations that may be useful towards trying to address the problems of parent-teacher relationships in rural schools.

6.2 Parent-teacher relationships.

It has emerged from data and other literature that relationships are complex, multi-dimensional and multifaceted. The complexity of the relationship is also bi-directional in nature. Parent-teacher relationships are based on mutual trust, understanding and respect. This study showed that parents and teachers feel that there is no proper progress in their children's education without them joining hands. However, the study also revealed that although both parties express the desire to work together and relate positively, there are social tensions and other factors that are obstacles to the relationship. Kindred, et al. (1990), in their study revealed that social tensions and conflicts exist whenever people work and live together.

The relationships form the basis of the study therefore factors that affect the parent-teacher relationship have been outlined in the study. Other relationships such as the parent-child, the teacher-child, and the parent-teacher-SGB have been dealt with as impacting on the parent-teacher relationship.

Moreover, there is a clear indication in the study that the parent-teacher-child relationship is integral for perpetuating positive parent-teacher relationships. The study reveals that parent-teacher relationships in schools are generally poor. Teachers were found to be lacking in strategies for initiating the parent-teacher relationship, whilst on the other hand parents depended upon teachers' skills and knowledge to initiate their relationship. Thus, teachers were expected to initiate the parent-teacher relationship, and failure to do so resulted in parents distancing themselves from school activities. In addition, parents bring knowledge of how they define a 'good teacher', and teachers also revealed their expectations from parents. Some of these expectations did not tally with what was actually happening in their relationship. Parents expected teachers to behave in a certain manner at school and in the public, and similarly parents also expected teachers to be efficient, competent, respectful, and sociable.

6.3 Roles

Both parents and teachers appear willing to work together and realise that they both need each other for the benefit of their children. Moreover, the relationship that prevails between parents and teachers is embedded in a clear definition of roles, because in any relationship people play different roles, and the roles are actually created in the context that the participants find themselves. Both parents and teachers in large part understood the roles that they were supposed to play according to policy dictates. The difficulty lay in the interpretation of the roles and the issue of agency in managing the relationship. Teachers were not always clear about the roles they should play in parent-teacher relationships.

Parents often viewed themselves as helpless and as being there for teachers to give direction to. Parents were willing to help and support the school but looked upon teachers to initiate the relationship and be open to parents.

Parents viewed themselves as lacking skills, knowledge and confidence to initiate and sustain parent-teacher relationships. Parents' own lack of skills, knowledge and

confidence was a recurring theme. Parents recounted their inability to mobilise themselves in support of their children (McNamara, et al. 2000, p. 479). Parents knew some of the roles, but did very little or nothing to support either the school and/or their children. However, many parents valued opportunities to offer their support, but they felt that they were not given the opportunity to do so.

Although learners were not part of the study, they were seen (by both parents and teachers) to be capable of mediating between parents and teachers. Learners spend their time both at home and at school and that put them in good standing to mediate the parent-teacher relationship. Children's behaviour at school and at home was found as having an impact on the parent-teacher relationship.

6.4 Status and education Level

Teachers are, by contrast to parents, educated and tended to view themselves as leaders and the parents as followers. However, teachers found themselves dependant on parents for school support and progress. The media, government publications and parents promote the view that parents are equal partners with teachers. However, if parents feel alienated from school and not involved in the way they (the parents) think it should be, they develop negative attitudes towards their partners, co-workers and the school and thus stand aloof. Therefore, parent-teacher relationships are negatively affected which then leads to poor or no parent support and/or involvement. The study revealed that parents were willing to support the school and the education of their children. Teachers also were desperate to accept the need and importance of parents in the education of the learners and even in the school as such.

6.5 Communication

Communication was one the major barriers in the parent-teacher relationship in this study. The school as an organisation is answerable and accountable for community

outreach according to both parents and teachers. This idea is advocated by Swap (1993), who argued that teachers are entrusted with the responsibility to communicate with parents so as to keep them informed about their children's progress, school policies and programs and opportunities for involvement.

Parents expected the school to be open and to initiate the communication process. Parents blamed teachers for not properly communicating with them. The regular manner adopted in schools of sending letters through learners had to be supplemented by other methods. Parents complained of meetings communicated at short notice leaving them with no or little time to make adjustments or prior arrangements.

Communication in meetings was said to be imposed leaving parents with little chance to express or raise their opinions. Parents were vulnerable to being manipulated with regards to aspects that were too complicated and on a higher level of comprehension. However, parents were proclaimed to be very aggressive and powerful in the spheres that they clearly understood. Parents' forcefulness was evident in dealing with cases such as learner abuse, criminal cases, behaviour of learners and the behaviour of teachers. It was also confessed that parents had a decisive power when it comes to determining the school fees to be paid by their children.

6.6 Government regulations and laws versus community values

Parents and teachers were both not to accept the intervention of the government in schools if this implied a retardation of their powers in relation to their schools and their children. Every community has its own dominant manner of addressing issues and solving its problems. The parents and teachers did not expect an outsider or a person not directly involved with it to dictate to and/or impose on their way of living. Parents emphatically stated that they needed to be regarded as important participants in the education system if there is going to be sound relationships.

It was a serious concern of both teachers and parents that children are given more rights than them (teachers and parents). These rights were mentioned as the right to education whether pregnant or not, the right not to receive corporal punishment, the right not to be responsible for school fees, and the right to question authority. Learners' rights seemed in tension with community values and norms and even other religious convictions.

Teachers and parents feel that the government is overstepping its authority in its intervention with schools and the rights she gives to learners, disregarding the diversity of cultures in school communities. Teachers and parents feel disempowered both at school and home because of being deprived of the major conviction of beating their children as a punishment. Not punishing children is felt as the main cause for totally destroying a life of a child and that leads to learners not progressing academically as they should. Moreover, it leads to parents withdrawing from schools and of teachers overlooking the morale of learners instead of helping to shape future citizens of both the community and the country.

6.7 Strengths and limitations of the study

A number of researchers have studied parent involvement and the parent-teacher relationship. There are a number of studies conducted both in South Africa and abroad. However, this study has focused on parent-teacher perspectives on their relationships as it has been noted that very few studies have been conducted on the relationships in particular. The relationship impacts greatly on parent involvement. The mere fact that the study is conducted in Northern Zululand is advantageous to put those rural communities on the research map.

Respondents of the study were equally selected from both males and females. It was advantageous that the researcher was a Zulu speaking person among the Zulu respondents that enabled the respondents to express themselves freely. It was also advantageous that the researcher is a teacher and researching the field she has knowledge of.

The study also had limitations such as the fact that learners were not interviewed to learn their experiences and views on the subject. It was also a limitation of some sorts that the study was conducted in a community unfamiliar to the researcher. Time resource is and will always be a problem and more especially in this busy, modern world.

6.8 Recommendations

The following recommendations emanate from the findings presented, analysed and discussed in chapter five. The presentation of recommendations will be in three phases: the first will be those from both parents and teachers' opinions; the second by the researcher from the study; and lastly general recommendations.

6.8.1 Parents and teachers recommendations

There were a number of suggestions from parents with regards to enhancing parent-teacher relationships. The respondents advocated the need to enhance parent-teacher relationships. It was acknowledged that the status of the relationship was poor at present, but, most importantly, there was a hope for reconciliation between schools and families and between parents and teachers.

The factors, as per the parents and teachers, that can enhance parent-teacher relationship are summarised as follows:

- Both teachers and parents were to be considerate and humble.
- Teachers have to communicate and build sound relationships with parents.
- Dedication from all stakeholders was emphasised.
- It was suggested that teachers have to participate in community activities.
- Invitations of parents to schools to discuss matters that relate to child education have to be encouraged.

- Traditional authorities were to be invited to intervene in schools to ensure the smooth running of those schools.
- The School Governing Body (SGB) has to be strong and functional to liaise between parents, teachers and learners.
- Empowering both teachers and parents on their roles and encouraging parents' participation in children's education by fulfilling their roles.
- It was also suggested that schools should be open and welcoming to the public.
- Teachers should accept parents as co-workers and partners in education.
- Schools should be non-discriminating.
- Parents had to be encouraged to co-operate and attend meetings.
- Good channels of disseminating information should be adopted in schools.
- Parents would appreciate being informed from simple, small decisions to major decisions that take place in the school and with their children, as well as other decisions incorporating tournaments, cultural activities, memorial services, school functions, intra-games and any other activity diverging from the normal functioning of the school. It was strongly suggested that parents are displeased when seeing their children outside classrooms during teaching time without being informed of the occurrence. Major decisions would include uniform, determining school fees and electing School Governing Body members.
- It was also suggested that schools have to afford parents and teachers opportunities to get to know one another in meetings where teachers and parents would discuss learner problems.
- Teachers should utilise periods by effective teaching.
- It was mentioned also that some parents are teachers themselves and can have constructive input at school.
- Schools have to be goal directed and make their goals and policies known to all stakeholders.
- It was suggested that teachers should at some stage visit the homes of children when they find it convenient.

6.8.2 Researchers' recommendations

6.8.2.1 Communication

On the issue of communication, for it to be effective and efficient, teachers need some workshops on how to deal with parents. Moreover, these workshops should be strategised and be directed to all teachers in all levels of the school, because teachers also manage the school and their classrooms. In addition, other teachers may find the workshops more empowering, informative and developmental and that could lead to developing strategies of dealing with parents relevant to their schools. Moreover, in reality holding a higher position at work does not always imply being dynamic and omniscience in all other spheres. Therefore, knowledge should be shared in the form of workshops inter and intra schools, within the ward and within the circuit or by organising experts from the district or outside. Drawing from that knowledge and experience of poor communication strategies, it is suggested that rotational delegation in performance schools be promoted and the use of talented people be encouraged for the benefit of the school community.

As a reward to the school for good communication, parents could help with the teaching of craftwork, sewing, woodwork, cooking, traditional dance, traditional songs, sport, farming, cultural activities and other skills. Parents in this area are talented and if given a chance by the schools to come and teach what they know, the parents would possibly pass on their skills to the learners who could in turn have the ability to earn a living from having acquired those skills from the parents.

Though we may not object that parents are not doing enough in participating and involving themselves in schools, conversely, schools are not doing enough to attract parents to them (schools). The community has differing cultures, customs, norms, values, skills, attitudes and knowledge that might be useful to the school. It is more convenient for a school to develop and implement policies for parent involvement and

public relations and also develop a culture of parent-teacher relationships that will surpass all relationship odds.

6.8.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Deducing from the findings it was evident that both teachers and parents were not clear of their roles in their relationship. Therefore, it is imperative that workshops aimed at empowering the two parties for their mutual benefit should be organised. Although the findings have revealed that teachers' value parent support and participation in their children's education, teachers are not clear on the specific roles they have to play in the relationship with parents. In every relationship parties have to play certain roles, those roles are played in context and through interaction. In parent-teacher relationships these roles need to be clarified for both teachers and parents. The suggestion is that the government or non-government organisations (NGOs) take the lead for implementation.

6.8.2.3 The Circuit Management support in schools

The study has shown that there is a lack of support from the circuit management structure on the issues of policies that regulates the relationship between the parents and teachers such as SASA. Principals may request outsiders/specialists and experts to workshop parents or the School Governing Bodies on issues that promote teacher-parent relationships.

6.8.2.4 Inviting role models and motivational speakers to schools on parents' day and meetings

The study has shown that some communities and educators have lost the desire for and spirit of co-operation. Therefore there is a need for specialists to inform the parents of their rights and responsibilities. Motivational speakers presenting motivational speeches and role models presenting their stories of success could provide knowledge

enrichment that could help to play a major role in bringing about unity and working as a team in building their own communities. Clarity should also be given on the government issues and regulations that seem to be of concern for parents.

6.8.2.5 The behaviour and attitude of stakeholders (teachers, parents and learners)

The study revealed that among other things that hinder the parent-teacher relationship is the behaviour and attitudes of the three stakeholders. In many instances the findings have revealed that the behaviour of teachers has a great influence on how other stakeholders perceive a real teacher to be. Also, the behaviour of parents and children's behaviour is also perceived in a certain manner by other stakeholders. This clearly shows that stakeholders bring with them certain knowledge about the ideal teacher, parent and learner. The problem emanates when the expected 'reality' differs from the actual. Meaning that what other stakeholders do, influences the attitude of the other stakeholders. Therefore, what teachers bring to the relationship and what parents bring to the relationship is vital for their relationship. It is therefore suggested that there be a clear tabling of what other stakeholders expect from the others, so that a consensus could be reached and adjustments made so that all the stakeholders, including learners, know what is expected of them. Initial meetings held in schools should be that of clarifying issues about the expectations of the stakeholders other than using meetings as platforms for teachers to manipulate parents.

6.8.2.6 Socio-economic background

The socio-economic status of rural parents is stated as poor. This status mainly includes poverty and a low level of education. It is suggested that an introduction of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) classes at school or in one of the neighbouring schools may help to build good and effective teacher-parent relationship in a school. Parents may also realise the benefits of a school in their society and end up owning and protecting their school. ABET should focus on those skills that help parents to be able

to develop their own businesses to generate income. The school may be a source of information for poverty alleviation programmes from the National Government.

6.9 General recommendations

- ❖ Future studies should also include learners to broaden the scope with their views.
- ❖ Other studies could be purposive in targeting single parents and/or these young parents who are still single.
- ❖ Other studies could also focus on children who stay in orphanages on how could the involvement of those parents responsible be maximised?
- ❖ Other studies could decide on involving more schools and parents.

6.10 Conclusion

The issue of the relationship between parents and teachers as a component of the growing emphasis on parental involvement in schooling is a complex one. Parental support is widely recognised as playing a central role in improving the ability of schools to meet the needs of the learners and the wider community. However, while the recognition and policy that encourages parental involvement is in place, this study has revealed that in some schools the relationship is in a poor state.

The reasons for the poor state are multi-faceted and related to the context. The particular barriers that pertain to the schools under study have been identified. While there is a common agreement that improving the relationship is essential, specific strategies will have to be put in place, and it is essential that the initiative come from the department and the schools. Investing in the development of the relationship (and modifying behaviour that hinders the relationship) must be viewed as an investment in the development of the school as a whole. Context specific strategies need to be developed and implemented, and the returns suggested by the literature could have a significant impact.

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APPENDIX A

Parents Interview Schedule

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions honestly, openly and according to your own knowledge and understanding. Your faithful responses on your perceptions on parent-teacher relationship is vital for this study.

Examining the extent of parent/teacher relationship in education partnership.

Personal Details

Gender of parent: [M] or [F]

Age of parent :
 21-30, []
 31-40, []
 41-50, []
 51-60, []
 60 and above. []

Relationship to learner: _____

Communication process and relationship between parents and teachers in schools.

- Do you ever communicate with teachers?

If 'Yes' - why?

If 'No' - give reasons.

- How often do you communicate with teachers?

Per month []
 Per quarter []
 Per semester []
 Per year []

- How do you normally communicate with teachers?
- What do you normally communicate?
- What would you like to communicate about? Why?
- What do you expect teachers to do in your partnership?
- Do you know the teachers of your child?

All []
 Some []
 None []
 Very few []

- If you do know the teachers, how do you know them?

Telephonically []
 Through letters []
 Face to face []
 Other.(Specify).....

- Have you ever visited your school where your child is registered for the past two years?

Yes [] No []

Give reasons.....

- How did you feel after your meeting and/or visit at school?
- Do you think you have to make more visits and/or contacts with teachers?

If Yes, state reasons.

If No, state reasons.

- What do you do if you want to report something about your child at school?
- Are you able to discuss matters that hamper or enhance your child's academic or non-academic performance openly with teachers?

If 'Yes' - how do you go about it?

If 'No' - give reasons.

- How do you understand your role to be in the partnership between you and the teachers for the benefit of your child?
- How do you co-operate in sustaining your relationship with the teachers?
- Are you also a member of the School Governing Body (SGB)?
- How is your relationship within the Governing Body?

Is it:

Poor []
 Very poor []
 Good []
 Best []

Thank you for your dedication.

APPENDIX B

Teachers Interview Schedule

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions honestly, openly and according to your own knowledge and understanding. Your faithful responses on your perceptions on parent-teacher relationship is vital for this study.

Examining the extent of parent/teacher relationship in their partnership.

Personal Details

Gender of a teacher: _____

Age of a teacher : _____

21-30,

31-40,

41-50,

51-60,

60 and above.

Communication process and relationship between teachers and parents in school.

- Do you like to communicate with parents/guardians of learners?

If 'Yes' - why?

If 'No' - give reasons.

- How often do you communicate with parents?

Per month []

Per quarter []

Per semester []

Per year? []

- How do you normally communicate with parents/guardians?
- What do you normally communicate about?
- What would you like to communicate about? Why?
- What do you expect parents to do in your partnership?

- Do you know most of the parents/guardians of your learners?

Yes [] No []

- How do you know them? For example:

Telephonically []

Through letters []

Face to face []

Other specify.....

- Have you ever visited some of your learner's homes?

Yes/No - Give reasons.

- Have you ever been invited by some parents/guardians of your learners?

Yes/No

- If yes, what was the aim of your visit or your invitation?

- How did you feel after your meeting and/or visit?

- Do you feel you have to make more visits and/or contacts with parents/guardians?

If Yes - state reasons.

If No - state reasons.

- What do you do if you want to report something about a child?

- Are you able to discuss openly with parents/guardians matters that impede or enhance children's academic and/or non-academic performance?

If Yes - how do you go about?

If No - give reasons.

- How do you co-operate in sustaining your relationship with parents/guardians?

- Are you also a teacher representative in the School Governing Body (SGB)?

- How is your relationship with the (SGB)?

Is it:

Poor	[]
Very poor	[]
Good	[]
Best	[]

Thank you for your dedication and patience.

APPENDIX C

PRINCIPALS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions honestly, openly and according to your own knowledge and understanding. Your faithful responses on your perceptions on parent-teacher relationship is vital for this study.

Personal Details

Gender : _____

Age of principal: _____

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

60+

School management structures view on parent/teacher relationship and communication process of the school.

- Does your school have School Management Team(SMT)?
Yes/No
- How does your school communicate with parents/guardians?
- How often does your school communicate with parents/guardians?

Per month	[]
Per quarter	[]
Per semester	[]
Per year	[]
- What does your school normally communicate about with parents?
- What is your school policy on parent/guardians visits to school?
- What is your school policy on parent/teacher communication?

- How does your school sustain the teacher/parent relationship in their partnership?
- Does your school invite parents to meetings?
- What is the parent's response to invitations?
- What strategic plans are adopted by your school to motivate parents to participate as partners in the education of their children?
- Does your school have a Governing Body? Yes/No
- How does the Governing Body of your school function?
- How is the relationship between the school and the Governing Body?
(Poor, very poor, good, best, average)
- Do you have a school policy which involves parents/guardians on the following:
 - Discipline
 - Fundraising
 - Children's education
 - Extra curricular activities

Thank you for your participation and patience.

Appendix D

Document Analysis

Minute Book

For a period of two years.

<u>1.SGB meetings</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>
• Number of members	[]	[]
• Number of meetings held	[]	[]
• Number of members attended each meeting	[]	[]
• Nature of issues discussed;		

<u>2. Parents meetings</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>
• Number of parents expected in relation to learner enrolment	[]	[]
• Number of meetings held	[]	[]
• Actual number of attendants per meeting	[]	[]
• Issues raised by parents that promote teacher/parent relationship.	[]	[]

<u>3. Parent/Teacher meetings</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>
• Number of meetings held.	[]	[]
• Number of attendants	[]	[]
• Nature of issues discussed	[]	[]

School Policy

- Availability
- How it was formed
- Involvement of parents
- Functionality

Thank you

Box 169
UBOMBO
3970
15 May 2002

The Chief Superintendent of Education Management
Ubombo District of Education
Private Bag x 604
UBOMBO
3970

Attention S.J. Nsele

Dear Sir,

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research project.

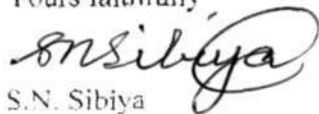
As part of the requirements for the course in Education Administration that I am undertaking at the School of Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am required to conduct a research project on the topic 'Examining the parent/teacher relationship in education at secondary schools within the Ubombo district'.

I have chosen to interview Teachers and School Principals as I have confidence in their professionalism, and knowledge of their subject. The research results of this project will help both the researcher and schools to understand the educational problems and processes.

I therefore respectfully request the co-operation of yourself and your staff to enable me to conduct this case study in the two schools that I have selected, namely Izwilenkosi High School under Jozini circuit and Mpiyakhe High School under Mbazwana circuit.

Your co-operation is highly valued

Yours faithfully



S.N. Sibiyi

Box 169
UBOMBO
3970

29 October 2002

The Secretary of Education KwaZulu-Natal
Department of Education and Culture (KZN)
Private Bag x 04
Ulundi
3838

Attention: Dr S.Z Mbokazi

Dear Sir

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research project.

As part of the requirements for the course in Education Administration that I am undertaking at the School of Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, I am required to conduct a research project on the topic 'Examining the parent/teacher relationship in education at secondary schools within the Ubombo district.

I have chosen this subject since it is relevant and essential to any teacher to benefit and understand the impact of parent/teacher relationships in education.

The critical questions that this study is researching are the following:

- (a) How do parents/guardians and educators describe their relationship?
- (b) What factors do parents/guardians and educators suggest impede and/or facilitate their relationship?
- (c) What school policies and practices are in place that facilitate or hinder the relationship?

The significance of this study is that it will contribute to the research literature on parental involvement in their children's education by providing an insight into the nature of the relationship in rural areas, and identify practices and strategies that may

be useful to policy makers, educators, managers and parents who wish to enhance the relationship between parents and educators.

I therefore respectfully request the co-operation of yourself and your staff to enable me to conduct this case study in the two schools that I have selected, namely Zwilenkosi High School under Ntshongwe circuit and Mpiyakhe High School under Mbazwana circuit.

I would be grateful if you would afford me the opportunity of completing my research project by enabling me to interview a selected number of your personnel in the relevant schools.

Your co-operation is highly valued.

Yours faithfully



S.N. Sibiyi

083 6839 763

cc: Professor C.R.M. Dlamini-Hand submitted 30th May 2002



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUR

HEAD OFFICE

INHLOKO HHOVISI

HOOFKANTOO

Address: 2nd Floor
Ikheli: Administration Building
Adres: King Dinizulu Highway
Ulundi
3838

Private Bag:
Isikhwame: Seposi
Privaatsak: 3338

Private Bag X04
Ulundi
3338

Telephone:
Ucingo:
Telefoon: 8743594
Fax: 8743593

Enquiries:
Imibuzo: Dr SZ Mbokazi
Navrae:


Reference:
Inkomba
Verwysing:

Date:
Usuku: 05/03/2003
Datum:

Mrs SN Sibiya
PO BOX 169
UBOMBO
3970

PERMISSION TO RESEARCH

1. The Department has no objection to your researching education management for academic purposes at Izwelenkosi and Mpiyakhe High Schools provided that you deliver a copy of your research results to the Head of this Department.
2. Your kind co-operation will be highly appreciated.


.....
Dr SZ Mbokazi
Deputy Director-General
Education Management and Support Services

Box 169
UBOMBO
3970
12 June 2002

083 6839 763

The Principal
Zwilenkosi High School
P.O Box
Jozini
3969

Attention : Zikhali M. B. (Mrs)

Dear Sir /Madam

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research project.

As part of the requirements for the course in Education Administration that I am undertaking at the School of Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, I am required to conduct a research project on the topic 'Examining the parent/teacher relationship in education at secondary schools within the Ubombo district.

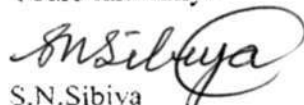
I have chosen to interview Teachers and School Principals as I have confidence in their professionalism, and knowledge of their subject. The research results of this project will help both the researcher and schools to understand the educational problems and processes.

I therefore respectfully request the co-operation of yourself and your staff to enable me to conduct interviews at your school with the relevant personnel.

I will be phoning you in the next few days to set up a meeting for an interview with yourself that will probably last for thirty-five minutes.

Your co-operation is highly valued.

Yours faithfully,


S.N. Sibiya

Izwilenkosi Secondary School
Private Bag x 621
UBOMBOMBO
3970

23 June 2002

Att: Mrs. S.N. Sibiya

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: Reply to your letter dated the 12th of June 2002-Request for Research in our School

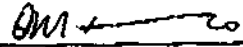
I, the Principal of the above school, write this letter on behalf of the School Governing Body in response to your request for conducting a research at our school.

Our school met with all staff members and discussed your request, and resolved to accede to your request with no problem. However the school would appreciate if you could link Izwilenkosi school with any of the potential donors whom you know that can help us in our poverty situation to build more classrooms.

Above all, the school also wishes to thank you for selecting this small school out of all other well resourced and old schools for your studies.

We hope to see you on the proposed dates for your initial visit.

Yours faithfully


Ms Nxumalo S.A
Principal

IZWILENKOSI SECONDARY

P/BAG 621

UBOMBOMBO 3970

DATE: 23/06/2002

Box 169
UBOMBO
3970
15 May 2002

083 6839 763

The Principal
Mpiyakhe High School
Private Bag x 304
Mbazwana
3974

Dear Sir,

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research project.

As part of the requirements for the course in Education Administration that I am undertaking at the School of Education, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, I am required to conduct a research project on the topic 'Examining the parent/teacher relationship in education at secondary schools within the Ubombo district.

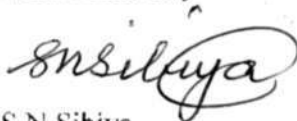
I have chosen to interview Teachers and School Principals as I have confidence in their professionalism, and knowledge of their subject. The research results of this project will help both the researcher and schools to understand the educational problems and processes.

I therefore respectfully request the co-operation of yourself and your staff to enable me to conduct interviews at your school with the relevant personnel.

I will be phoning you in the next few days to set up a meeting for an interview with yourself that will probably last for thirty-five minutes.

Your co-operation is highly valued

Yours faithfully



S.N. Sibiya



MPIYAKHE SECONDARY SCHOOL

PRIVATE BAG 304
MBAZWAZNA
3974 KZN

TEL: 035 - 5710108

20 June 2002

In response to your letter dated 12 June 2002 requesting to conduct a research at our school, I am glad to inform you that the Senior management, SMT and the SGB warmly accept your request. We commit ourselves to be of good service and benefit in anything you would want to have access on or to know.

We hope that during the course of your research we shall also learn a great deal from your findings. As a lucky school that you have choosen, we shall welcome both criticism and suggestions from you more especially because we are committed to nation building.

As all structures of the school we wish you success in your project, really South Africa needs woman of your character. Phambili ntombazana!


Yours in Service
Mr M.S Mnguni


The Principal

RECEIVED
MPIYAKHE SECONDARY SCHOOL
20 JUNE 2002

20 JUNE 2002

RECEIVED
MPIYAKHE SECONDARY SCHOOL
20 JUNE 2002



CLLR MG MNGUNI