

**EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT VIA
THE CAPABILITY APPROACH: A CASE OF A LOW INCOME SCHOOL
COMMUNITY.**

THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN EDUCATION

FACULTY OF EDUCATION



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OCTOBER, 2017

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KEY WORDS

Parental involvement

Teachers

Parents

Low-income school communities

Children

Barriers

Poverty

Strategies

Programmes

Capability Approach



ABSTRACT

Parental involvement in low-income school communities in the Western Cape, South Africa, has received little attention irrespective of its significance to learner outcomes. This study explores parental involvement with regard to teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, as well as barriers and solutions to meaningful parental involvement in a low-income school community in the Western Cape. This study, in the form of a qualitative study, sought to establish how teachers perceived parental involvement, and what restricts parents with poor socio-economic backgrounds from becoming involving in their children's education. Additionally, the study sought to establish or develop ways in which parental involvement could be improved.

This study adopted a qualitative method design using qualitative procedures such as semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, observation and an open-ended questionnaire. It emerged from the findings that teachers had limited understanding of parental involvement. They perceived parental involvement to be parent's school-based activities such as fund-raising and the provision of school materials for the learners. Most of the teachers were never exposed to training on how to involve parents.

Teachers believed that lack of material resources and poor parental education contributed to the issue of a lack of parental involvement in the school. Furthermore, participant parents indicated that they are willing to become involved in their children's education; however, their involvement was restricted by various barrier factors such as poverty and a lack of enabling environment. Both (teachers and parents) participants also suggested programmes or useful ways in which parental involvement could be promoted, such as the provision of basic infrastructures, grant support, educational training or facilities and a supportive environment for the parents. The findings revealed that creating an enabling environment to nurture these parents' capabilities will improve parental involvement.

The capability-approach framework was used not only to explain the restraining factors to parental involvement but also to propose or suggest ways or intervention measures to improve parental involvement in their children's education, especially the parents from the community of this research. The approach was use to analyse parental involvement with the view to develop parental involvement or parents' capabilities in the school community.

DECLARATION

I hereby confirm that the research Exploring teachers' perceptions of parental involvement via the Capability Approach: A case of a low-income school community. is my work. It has not been submitted for a degree or award at this university or any other university.

Signed.....

Date.....

Oji Ikechukwu



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am sincerely thankful to Almighty God for making it possible for me to complete this work. He granted me strength and sees me through throughout the field work.

I am also deeply grateful to my supervisor, Prof Rouaan Maarman for his constructive advice, support and encouragement from inception to completion of this thesis.

A special thanks to my whole family for their encouragement and support throughout the study. I would like to express a special word of thanks to Engr. Chuks N Oji, Mr Elvis O Oji, Chief Femi, Uka N Oji and Mr Tony O Oji for their material and moral support. I am also thankful to my sister-in-law, Mrs Chidimma C Oji, for her encouragement and support.

I wish to thank the entire school, especially the principal, the teachers and parents, for granting me permission to carry out this study. It is my sincere wish that, having investigated this study, all those who were involved or strive for improved parental involvement will sincerely benefit from the needed developmental policy programmes.

I am also deeply grateful to my friends Mr Chukwuma Ikonne, Ms Fhulufhelo Rambau and my writing coach Mr Daniel Angaama for their support and constructive advice that contributed to successful completion of this thesis. I also register my thanks to Mr John Dorrington for his assistance in editing this work. I am grateful indeed.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

MR OJI IKECHUKWU

Dear Sir or Madam,

Title: EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT VIA THE CAPABILITY APPROACH: A CASE OF A LOW-INCOME SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

This is to confirm that I have checked and edited Mr Oji Ikechukwu's above-stated academic thesis. My contribution to his dissertation was solely for the purpose of checking and editing his writing style, language, grammar and punctuation etc.

In no way did I assist him in the subject matter of his dissertation, which remains his work and his alone.

Sincerely,



John Dorrington.

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ABBREVIATIONS

PI	Parental Involvement
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SE	Socio-Economic



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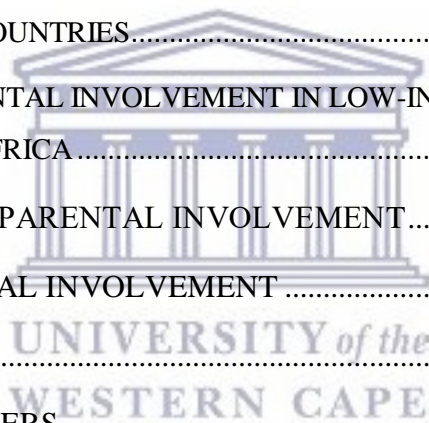
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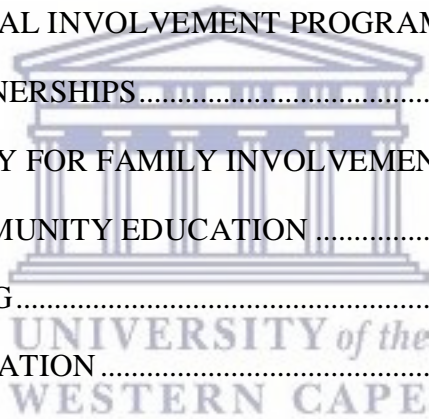
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

PROBLEMATIZING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Many studies have revealed that poverty has a challenging effect on the success of education as well as school-going learners. The Education for All Report in Daniel-Oghenetega (2010) revealed that more than 1.2 billion households across the world are affected by poverty, which in turn impacts negatively on the learners' performance at school (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). In other words, the children's education is most affected when parents struggle to eke out a living. Studies in many countries have revealed the negative effect, of families living in poverty-stricken areas, on their children's education (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). This means that children can struggle when parents' roles are limited due to a lack of basic resources. Parents' access to resources, like social resources and their ability to effectively employ them in their children's education is very essential because learners' outcomes are strongly linked with parental incomes and other indicators of socio-economic status (United States Department of Education, 2004).

Attempts to improve parental involvement in South African education are being challenged by issues of poverty, parents' lack of education, low parental self-perceptions and poor lines of communication between parents and schools (Crate South Africa Policy Brief, 2011). A number of factors, of which the most prominent is poverty, contribute to limited parental involvement in children's education in South Africa. In this case, it is vital to investigate these barriers when making policy interventions or programmes to enhance parental involvement.

According to Daniel-Oghenetega (2010), poverty can be seen as a low-economic ability to face or accept challenges and well-being; for example, the obvious physical condition or social acceptance as exhibited in the days of apartheid. The 2013 SAIRR report in a South African research by Gumede (2014) reveals that 'nearly three-quarters of top managers in companies employing 50 or more people are white, and the unemployment rate among Africans is four

times higher than it is among whites' (p.14). Moreover, the Census 2011 Report in Gumede (2014) pointed that 'in 2011 African-headed households had an average annual income of R60, 613 while white-headed households had an average annual income of R365, 134' (p.14). The whites earn almost seven times further than Africans. Given these statistics, the new democratic government should have wider knowledge of the effect of the income gap in society, and the Department of Education should seek solutions to address the adverse effect of poverty on schooling in general and on parental involvement in particular.

The underpinning philosophy of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (SASA), is to provide formal power in education to parents and communities. However, parental involvement is confronted with a number of barriers which include social class, poverty, poor parental education, unemployment, low-paid jobs, a lack of knowledge and of required skills in order to effectively participate in their children's education (Vuyisile, 2012). In other words, parental involvement may also be affected in terms of the individual parents' socio-economic status (SES).

Even though the new democratic government encourages parents to be actively involved in their children's education, the negative influence of apartheid is still very visible in the former disadvantaged communities (Department of Education, 1995). According to Singh & Mbokodi (2004), policy makers or schools need to be aware of the effect of the socio-economic status on parental involvement in their children's education. They argue that efforts to involve parents may be biased, given that some of the parents are of the former disadvantaged communities in South Africa. There may be chances of effective parental involvement, in the middle-class societies (Singh & Mbokodi, 2004). Such an imbalance in parental involvement in their children's education is clearly seen in the historically disadvantaged schools where most of the parents lack the requisite level of education to effectively get involved in their children's education. Low parental involvement is caused by such factors as low literacy levels and unemployment, among other things.

According to Daniel-Oghenetega (2010) unemployment, low-paid jobs, low levels of parent's education, a lack of good living conditions, poor shelters, and a lack of social facilities are characterized by poverty in the South African context, which is also an indication of the legacy of apartheid. These factors can become a threat to parental involvement in their children's education. Adams & Waghid (2005) revealed that the lack of a required education level of parents in the former disadvantaged communities (low-income school communities) amongst

other factors contributed to a lack of parental involvement in their children's education in South Africa. This means that factors such as low levels of parental education, amongst other things, resulted to the problem of meaningful parental involvement in the former disadvantaged communities referred to as low-income communities in this current research. All these restricting factors influence the parents' ability to convert available resources into real support for their children's education.

Moreover, Bagarette (2011), noted that most teachers are still undermining the status, functions and roles of parents in their schools in South Africa. Such a situation calls for investigation into teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, the likely barrier factors experienced by these parents, and what strategies/programmes could be used to enhance parental involvement in the context of low-income school communities. According to Sen (1999), any constraining factor to human capability or freedom is seen as unfreedom of the persons' capability like teachers undermining the roles of parents. Also, as a result of poverty (the chief problem mentioned above), children's education suffers as parents struggle to support or get involved in their children's education. Another obscure factor is that the demographic status of working-class parents is different from that of middle-class parents, and this tends to make it difficult to compare them. There is a rising concern that parents themselves are worthy of consideration in their own right (Department for Education and Skills (DFES), 2007).

For the fact that a relationship exists between parents' socio-economic status and children's academic outcomes makes it suitable for research into the effect of the capability approach on parental involvement. Furthermore, broader societal factors, associated with social exclusion and neglect, can have influence on the functioning of individual parents. Therefore, in families where there are significant child-support issues, assessments regarding the ability of parents to support their children's education and meet their necessary needs are vital to informed relevant policy-intervention. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) assert that factors such as low salary, poor education, social and economic inequalities, and a lack of skills and knowledge increases individual parents' poverty. Therefore such a context is likely to affect learners' outcomes. Of course these restraining factors should be seen with concern. There should be policies or developmental programmes in place to contain these factors (Harriet et al., 2014).

According to the capability approach, development can be seen as the process of increasing people's opportunities. To make provision of freedoms to people, the 'unfreedoms' that limit their freedoms must be removed. 'Unfreedoms' occur through deprivation, limitation of

economic resources, discriminatory policies, social exclusion for a particular group and poor literacy levels, and so forth. However, such freedoms are achieved when people can participate in any actions or activities which they value, and be whoever they want to be (Sen, 1993). According to Sen (1999) unfreedoms refer to inequalities in a society. Linking capabilities to a South African context, Maarman (2009), notes in his argument ‘that the South African business world reduced poverty to a dependent state in complex and unequal relationships of patronage, clientelism and exploitation, and deny them of the resources and capabilities that they need to be able to claim the rights of entitlements that were theoretically afforded to them in the democratic society’ (p.322). He stresses the denial of political choice and human rights/welfare as the main theme in understanding capabilities.

In addition, limited access to quality education and constrained well-being contributed to ‘unfreedoms’ in South Africa. Denial of rights and other opportunities that enhance living conditions reduces capabilities. Effective parental involvement in the education of their children can increase the capabilities of parents. Sen (1999), states that capabilities are those things a person values doing, or being. These ‘beings and doings’ are referred to as ‘functionings’ which constitute what makes life worth living. Functioning, however, includes being literate, living in a conducive environment, having a voice, high self-esteem and the ability to contribute to mainstream society as well as being healthy and respected (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). This means that the ability to attain personal success and fulfill personal potential are the basis of this approach where a person’s valued life is determined by a variety of choices and opportunities to do and become whatever he or she desires. Hence, the unidimensional approach to poverty as induced by low incomes must be replaced with various deprivations of capabilities where the context in which a person exists hinders the valued success that may be achieved. According to Sen (1999), deprivation happens as a result of limited surroundings to what a person can do or achieve. Therefore any constraints to a person’s capability are to be seen as poverty.

Having given the notion of poverty in the South African context, this study will focus primarily on teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement, but it recognizes that there could be barriers impacting on the parents’ capability to effectively be involved in their children’s education. The study will explore a number of factors which mitigate against meaningful parental involvement and will analyze the recommended strategies and programmes to promote parental involvement.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Collet (2013), a number of factors such as economics, social and personal circumstances played a negative role in parental involvement in poor school communities which impacts negatively on a learner's academic performance. In other words, a parent's life circumstances have a way of affecting learner outcomes. Moreover, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), in a South African study, highlighted the complexities in parental involvement when they noted that teachers share different views with regard to parental involvement (Lawson, 2003). This means that teachers are also not curtailed with regard to what parental involvement is. There is a call to investigate teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, especially in low-income schools.

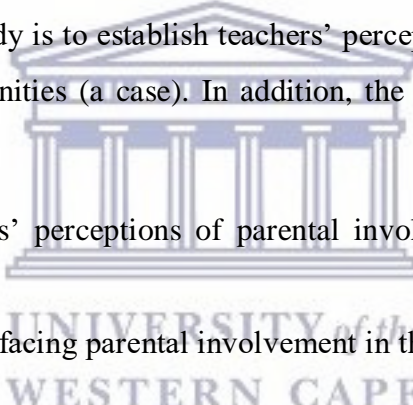
According to Singh & Mbokodi (2004), blacks' parental involvement is crucial regarding the promotion of children's academic achievements. This means that parents with less involvement in their children's homework and other educational activities contribute to the poor performances of their children in school. The current climate of educational change in South Africa has brought researchers' attention to the factors that might have an impact on learners' outcomes (Singh & Mbokodi, 2004). A learner's family is considered to be a determining factor that influences the learner's academic performance. Parental involvement is crucial to children's education. Parents from low-income school communities need to be empowered if they are to effectively support the learners' education. However, since the inception of democracy, various poverty-reduction policies have been put in place. The changing face of poverty and the movement of education policies out of the former system should be seen as urgent imperatives that justify capabilities analysis, social justice, and well-being or developmental framework. Although one could argue that many policies, on poverty and public education in South Africa, have been poor in terms of implementation.

The pervasive poverty experienced by the majority of people in South Africa today is as a result of various Bantustan stands (territory set aside for black South Africans during apartheid). However, different scopes or methods such as the use of socio-economic status, the use of capability or social exclusion have been employed by various researchers to explore or define poverty (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), working-class parents living in poverty when compared to middle-class or affluent parents are likely to be facing various challenges other than resource-deprivation, which may have an influence on their children's academic performance. These challenges range from low-income earnings, inequality, low levels of education, lack of a conducive environment and low self-esteem.

Hence, the demographic status of poor working-class parents differs from that of affluent or middle-class parents; this makes it difficult for comparisons. According to Sen (1999), ‘unfreedoms’ are those inequalities that depreciates the societies. In order for schools to promote parental involvement, it becomes crucial to identify the barrier factors to parental involvement so that, when teachers try to get parents involved, they can examine these barrier factors that prohibit parents from getting involved and evolving strategies or programmes to promote the level of parental involvement in their schools. Additionally, policy programmes, such as social services to improve human well-being, must be improved in order to account for the realities of learners’ experiences and less parental involvement in low-income school communities. Therefore, this study will make use of the capability-approach model to explore barrier factors and suggest solutions to parental involvement in the context of this research location.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overriding aim of this study is to establish teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement in low-income school communities (a case). In addition, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- 
- To understand teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement in the context of the school.
 - To investigate barriers facing parental involvement in their children’s education in the school community.
 - To explore strategies to promote parental involvement in the school community.
 - To identify programmes that can be used to enhance parental involvement in the school community.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question is: What are teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement in low-income school communities? Furthermore, a number of sub-questions will guide the study. Question one (for the teachers). The reason this question was directed to the teachers alone is because of the research evidence that teachers share different views with regard to parental involvement in South Africa. Questions Two, Three and Four were directed at both teachers and parents in order to have both views on barriers/solutions to parental involvement.

1. What do teachers perceive as parental involvement in their children's education in the context of your school?
2. What do teachers and parents perceive as barriers to parental involvement in the school?
3. What do teachers and parents perceive as strategies to promote parental involvement in the school?
4. How can the findings enhance the planning of an effective parental involvement programme in the school?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Recent years have seen a number of poverty-alleviation policies enacted by the democratic government of South Africa. However, the implementation of these policies was poor. The status in former disadvantaged communities, referred to by this research as low-income school communities, cannot be over-emphasized. Efforts to provide quality education, with due consideration to parents' capabilities, can go a long way to interpreting gaps in terms of socio-economic status within the society. Understanding this goal may require the enablement of poor families or marginalized groups so that they can be involved effectively in their children's education through means such as education programmes or other interventions that promote parental involvement in their children's education. Since poor individual parents in most cases lack a good level of education and income resources, they certainly experience stressors in converting their little available resources to support their children's education.

Some researchers (for example, Singh & Mbokodi, 2004; Matshe, 2014; Siririka, 2007) have researched parental involvement but have focused mainly on school governance bodies; in that way they excluded other crucial aspects of parental involvement. The significance of this study will also be positioned in the perceptions of teachers on parental involvement, as research evidence in South Africa has revealed that teachers share different views on parental involvement (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). It is certain that this particular study offers an added value to the literatures as it will contribute a different dimension because of the demographic status and needs of the interested community. This study is unique in its own way by using the capability approach to evaluate each context-based barrier factor, and remedy for parental involvement in the context of the research site. Therefore, this study will capture learners' experiences of schooling within the South African context and clearly expose the manifestation of poverty as theorised by Sen (1999), and also try to propose developmental approaches (such as strategies or programmes) to enhance parental involvement.

Effective parental involvement includes the physical, social and informative involvement of parents, which is interrupted by poverty. Hence, this study will hopefully present reasons to re-focus on pro-poor education policies with specific interest in the parents' capabilities. The case study therefore focuses on a low-income school community and explores the indicators of poverty. Also, strategies/programmes to develop parental involvement in the context of the school community were explored. In this regard, the study hopefully will inform policy makers on the right scopes and approaches to adopt, especially in informal-settlement communities. In other words, this study sought to alleviate the poverty factors challenging informal-settlement parents.

1.6 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The economic context and living conditions of these people (research site) draw the interest of the researcher. The site of the school was chosen based on its socio-economic status and deprivation indices. The researcher sought to establish parental involvement in low-income school communities. This is an empirical study. Empirical research is a research method of gaining knowledge into people's experiences, and other social phenomena, in natural settings with the aim of understanding how meanings were interpreted (Sherman & Webb, 1998). Empirical research is conducted in natural settings. The qualitative research seeks to explore things as they naturally are. The reason for delimiting this site for the study is because of the many challenges this township faces in the new South African democratic government. This is a case study; the study involved qualitative methods such as observation, taking field notes, a document study, open-ended questionnaires, focus-group interviews or interviews conducted at the school and homes of the learners. The participants include parents and teachers.

1.7 EXPLANATION OF CONCEPTS AND RELATED TERMS

Parental involvement - This refers to the active participation of parents through various means, such as home- and school-based activities channelled to benefit a child's learning.

Parent - This refers to a child's biological parents or guardians who are responsible for the child's education.

Low-income communities - This refers to townships that are established due to segregation policies during the apartheid regime, mainly characterised by informal buildings and a low socio-economic status.

Teachers - This refers to educators or academic coaches.

Barriers - This refers to hindrances that prevent one from achieving something.

Strategies - This refers to organized plans or methods to bring about achievements.

Programmes - This refers to developmental projects to achieve a goal in a particular area.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This section provides an overview of the organisation of the research by giving a brief summary of what each chapter entails.

Chapter 1 introduces the research-background information and puts the problem into context. The problem statement, research questions, aims and the value of the research were also indicated, including brief information about the most suitable research design chosen for this study.

Chapter 2 constitutes a critical review literature highlighting the problem. The discussion starts by defining parental involvement. It continues with trending practices of parental involvement over time and teachers' views on parental involvement. The chapter further highlights the barrier factors to parental involvement, including strategies and programmes to enhance parental involvement. Furthermore, the chapter provides the capability-approach framework within which the research context is discussed.

Chapter 3 explains the effectiveness and justification of the qualitative research design that was used in this study. It also provides ethics and the trustworthiness of the research.

Chapter 4 presents the study's findings. This presentation constitutes the interview questions and themes extracted from the data analysis.

Chapter 5 presents a summary on the basis of data analysis and a discussion of the results.

CHAPTER TWO

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOL COMMUNITIES AND POVERTY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education is a complicated and important issue, with many consequences for the learners (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). Having confirmed the importance of parental involvement in children's education, the question now should be: 'What do teachers perceive to be parental involvement?' In this very chapter the researcher will focus on the meaning and nature of parental involvement over time by beginning with the concepts of parental involvement, including the teachers' views; next will be the barriers to parental involvement; finally, the chapter wraps up with the existing strategies and programmes (approaches) developed to enhance or promote parental involvement in low-income school communities. This will be done in the light of current debates around the topic and the theoretical framework.

This chapter will then examine what comprises parental involvement in low-income school communities and will present a theoretical framework that will be used to analyse the nature of parental involvement in the context of this research site. The prominent studies that were used to pursue this particular study focused mainly on studies of parental involvement in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Japan, New Zealand, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Making use of studies from other developing countries that share similar experiences to that of South Africa, in terms of economic development and history, could provide an insight to the practice of parental involvement in the continent. In addition, studies from developed countries will be useful so as to gain more insight into global trends in terms of the practice of parental involvement globally.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement is a complex term; the question is: 'Who are these parents?' According to the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996, the term 'parent' refers to primary caregivers, biological parents or someone who is legally in care of a learner. It includes anyone who is in charge of the learners' schooling (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The concept of 'parent' refers to those who are legally appointed to look after a child, whether as biological or

foster parents. According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:8), this broad definition allows both the legal basis and the essence for schools to promote diverse families. In this study, the word 'parent' refers to individuals that are either married or single, a relative or grandparent, or a legal guardian or foster parent responsible for a child's education and development. Hence, the ongoing literature will capture the true definition of parental involvement.

Myeko (2000) defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in their children's school activities, such as school functions, which promote their children's academic outcomes. These school functions include attending PTA meetings, fund-raising, and other school events. Traditionally, parental involvement has been narrowly defined (Nye et al., 2006) by focusing on the effective engagement of the parent with their children on home activities that support the learning taking place in schools. These include taking their children to libraries, reading aloud to their children, and playing computer word-puzzle games, as such activities will improve the child's academic performance at school. The difference between the above definitions is that one takes the shape of formal parental involvement which occurs at schools while the other which takes its place at home slightly looks informal. However, both of them focus in nurturing a child's learning. Naturally, parents are their child's first teachers. This is one of the roles seriously taken by most parents because of the hugely recognized influence parents have in their children's education (Shearer, 2006).

However, schools and governmental agencies have quickly taken over this role in which parents are seen as inept at fulfilling their responsibilities as first teachers (Daniel-White, 2002).

Another definition of parental involvement is from a study by Baker et al. (1999) conducted in America. In this study Baker et al. (1999:371) highlighted a number of parental activities which teachers view as contributory to the promotion of children's skills and cognitive development, among other things, and which are regarded with high expectations for the academic success of young learners. They include: calls to the school; talking to the teachers; showing respect towards the school; communicating or discussing school topics with the child; monitoring the child's homework; helping the child with academic skills; writing stories or making grocery lists with the child; assisting the child with reading; visiting the library together with the child; working on projects with the child; taking the child to social or cultural activities; facilitating transitions to schools; monitoring the child's television viewing; being interested in school activities; and responding to notes sent home from the school. According to Baker et al. (1999),

all these activities constitute what parental involvement is in current times. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will take the meaning of parental involvement to be the above-listed parental activities.

Parental involvement can also be seen as activities which seek to bring together in some way the different realms of home and school activities in the interest of the child's cognitive development (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). In other words, parental involvement encompasses all home-based activities, including school-based activities which promote children's education. Pate & Andrews (2004), in a broader definition, define parental involvement as the interaction between parent and child regarding learning skills and the commitment of parents in providing resources in the child's schooling. The second part of parental involvement is that which takes place at school, such as attending PTA meetings, involvement in volunteering at school, attendance at school functions, reading one-on-one with children in the classroom, and helping with fund-raising or communicating with teachers.

Children benefit significantly when parents are effectively involved in their education. Research indicates that children tend to be successful when their parents fully support their learning, both at school and in the home environment, despite the social class of such parents or their level of education (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009:15). Harris et al. (2009), concurring, argue that parental involvement benefits and improves a child's academic achievements. For example, parental engagement in a child's homework produces higher learner achievements at school. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of parental involvement in other parts of the world.

The United States Department of Education (1994) reported in its review of some activities associated with effective parental involvement such as parents who are committed in sourcing their child's academic needs; parents who provide a suitable learning environment at home; parents who attend school meetings and student-parent discussion at home. Comer (2000) also sees parental involvement as a way of improving teaching and learning conditions in the schools. When parents become involved they also motivate teachers and learners. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:14) claim that when parents become involved in their children's education, it increases parent's self-esteem while at the same time improving their children's academic performance. For example, when parents provide resources such as reading materials and a suitable home-learning environment as well as time for interactive sessions with their children on school content, there is the possibility of effective learning. In other words, under such

conditions children are likely to achieve positive academic outcomes. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:12) further emphasize that, no matter the social class or socio-economic status of parents, all parental involvement has a relatively positive effect on a child's academic outcomes. According to Comer (2000:2), the highest predictor of children's academic success is not the race or social status of their parents but the extent to which such parents are able to become involved. Hence, children are likely to excel in their education, irrespective of their racial background or the socio-economic status of their parents. Therefore the more ability a parent has in terms of the ability to become involved in his/her child's schooling, the more such parents' functioning is in advantage (Sen, 1993)

Epstein (1995) developed a framework for the six types of parental involvement used in measuring levels of involvement. They include:

- *Type 1: Parenting*

The idea of this type of involvement is partnership. According to Epstein (1995), schools should help families with parenting skills that are appropriate to a child's development by creating a bond between the home and the school, and also help families to set up home conditions that support children's learning. Examples of parenting support are: introducing programmes for child and adolescent development; having workshops for parenting and child-rearing skills; holding training in different aspects of parenting; having family support programmes; and providing information on emotional and psychological development.

- *Type 2: Communication*

Communication involves developing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication. Communication should involve communicating with families about school programmes and providing information about their children's progress.

- *Type 3: Volunteering*

Volunteering includes creating a school climate that is open to parental support and assistance. This includes creating a school climate that is open, friendly and helpful so that families or parents are recruited as volunteers, trained and organized to support students and school programmes.

- *Type 4: Learning at Home*

This involves parents playing a key role in assisting their children's learning activities at home. For example, helping in homework and providing the necessary resources to promote learning at home.

- *Type 5: Decision-making*

The school includes parents' participation in school policies and sharing in decision-making opportunities with parents. Examples of these include participating in the school's governance and its councils, committees and parent organizations.

- *Type 6: Collaboration with the Community*

Collaboration involves integrating with the community and establishing partnerships that will benefit school programmes, family practices and child development.

From the above definitions it can be argued that parental involvement implies the willing and active involvement of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities. When parents become involved, the child's behaviour and parental confidence improve. Also the above has shown that the effective participation of parents in their children's education greatly benefits the learners' academic performances at school. While the definitions are not the same, there is general consensus regarding the basic aspects of parental involvement.

2.3 HISTORY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT OVER TIME

The significance of parents in the education of their children cannot be over-emphasized. The responsibility of parents in the education of children has been emphasized in different ways for a period of years now. This has been proved by various studies as well as the constant acknowledgement of parental involvement by different media representatives, including policies.

The term 'parental involvement' can be perceived in different ways, from parents showing support in their children's education to parents actively participating in the administration of the school. According to John (2009), parental involvement has two important forms: firstly, it involves the support of parents in their children's education and, secondly, it involves active parental participation in the education of children. Research on parental involvement in the education of their children has been conducted in some communities, but not yet in this research location. The historical context of parental involvement over time is crucial to this study

because the historical development over time has shaped the understandings and views of parental involvement.

Research suggested that parental involvement during informal education began in the early years. Throughout the world, parents have been involved in the education of their children, with little or no formal involvement (Berger, 1983). According to Berger (1983), during the early years parental involvement was considered as a key factor in a child's development. Children were taught rules and regulations of how to conduct themselves in both the family environment and the society as a whole. Berger also added that children were cultivated in different ways as required in terms of obtaining their daily food supply. This was essential in terms of children's survival and development into adulthood. Children were taught farming and other agricultural production activities.

In the early years, parental involvement was the primary responsibility of parents as they began to get involved in the education of their children from birth. According to Frost (in John, 2009), a long time ago the society had no means of acquiring formal education. So children were educated by their parents and were constantly reminded that they would grow up to become adults one day. Parents were not adequately equipped and depended on their instincts when teaching their children. According to John (2009), the methods used by parents during this process of teaching and learning were mainly telling and showing. Children were punished when they failed to measure up to the standards set by the family.

Over the decades education shifted from informal to formal and public education. Professional teachers began to teach children in formalized school settings. A formalized public-school system was established, with standardized teaching and learning processes outside the home. Braun and Edwards (in John, 2009) have highlighted the need in early societies to maintain a stable and viable society. Therefore, schools have to develop the learning process needed to take place in a formalized school set-up. Schools continued to develop from 3787 to 1580 BC. However, parents who could afford it had to send their children to formal schools. Professional and qualified educators were solely responsible for teaching the children. Also, teaching and learning were more arranged and structured than the informal education at home.

However, parents were not excluded from the school as they co-operated with educators in the education of their children. According to Berger (1983), regulations in schools in Greece guided families to teach their children literacy and swimming skills. School activities were regular and timely, while the parents had every right to express preference over the schools

they sent their children to. Berger further stated that Roman parents were actively involved in the formal education of their children. According to John (2009), a number of modern educationists, such as Rousseau, John Locke and Froebel, researched extensively on the need for parental involvement in the education of learners. Watson et al. (2012) have offered a time line of parental involvement in education in America. They noted that in 1945, after World War II, parental-focus involvement included active parental participation in school-based activities, for example parents' conferences, fund-raising events, PTA meetings and serving as school monitors. They further mentioned that during the 1960s policies were introduced to promote parental involvement as a way to improve education for poor and disadvantaged children.

Currently, the practice of partnership or parental involvement in education has been in existence across the world. For example, countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Kenya and so forth have encouraged the involvement of parents in education. Studies on parental involvement across the world have shown the significant effect of parental involvement in the academic performance of learners. Policy makers and school practitioners in the United States acknowledge the vital role of parental involvement, not only in learners' outcomes but also in the success of school programmes. It was introduced in policy imperatives at national and local levels (United States Department of Education, 2004). Also, the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 which was re-introduced as the No-Child-Left-Behind imperative of 2001, clearly shows that parental involvement is an important factor in improving academic achievements for learners (Watson et al., 2012). Parental involvement in the education of children continues to be crucial in terms of learner performance.

According to Watson et al. (2012), the US government in 1994, led by President Clinton, signed into law the American 2000 Act, mandating parental involvement. While policy imperatives introduced for inclusive partnership in the search for effective school programmes for learners had a history that lasted several years ago, no policy imperative was more specific than that of No-Child-Left-Behind (NCLB) Section 1118, regarding the role parents should play in the education of their children. The policy connected the development of parental involvement more specifically than any other policy in terms of the involvement of parents in the United States. Regarding family involvement, these are the words of the United States Department of Education (2011): 'Family engagement has evolved from a limited focus on parents' role as supporter of their child's learning at home...to a broader definition that recognizes the multiple

ways that parents are engaged-at home, at school and in community-and not only in their own child's education, but in the efforts to improve the quality of education for all children (p.1).'

It is important to acknowledge universality in order to gain more insight into parental involvement internationally. According to Desforges & Abouchar (2003:3), parents from different cultural backgrounds or race may support their children obviously in different ways. The impact of such support remains the same. Moreover, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) also confirm the positive impact of parental involvement across all societies. What is to be taken into consideration is the acknowledgement of the different contexts in which involvement happens, and which this study sought to establish in order to generate effective strategies or programme initiatives suitable to the context of the study. Williams (2008), in a study in America, discovered that parental involvement was visible in terms of parents' provision of learning materials and assistance with homework and other extra-curricular activities. He suggests that parents strongly believe that it is their responsibility to support their children because they value the principle that families play a major role regarding a child's academic achievements. In other words, such parents make an effort to know the school aims regarding the education of their children and try to help.

Linking schools to communities, Bowen (2004) argues that schools exist in the society, are affected by the society as whole, and in turn have a direct influence on children's academic achievements at school level. Effective parental involvement and participation can be achieved when the interest is on the levels of parents in children's education. Partnerships between schools and homes are based on shared responsibilities for the benefit of the child's education. According to the Australian Government (2008), partnership is crucial regarding a child's development because of its proven relationship to improved learning, attendance and behaviour, irrespective of the learner's family background. Partnerships between families and school are encouraged in order to provide a mutual relationship between teachers, parents and learners with an emphasis on sharing goals or aims that are in the best interests of the learners. Furthermore, these partnerships benefit the school through successful programmes and learning opportunities for learners. They also enable parents to be a part of the school governance as well as contributing to overall teachers' satisfaction (Australian Government, 2008).

The Australian Government (2008) provides in detail the underpinning principles that are significant for effective partnerships between homes and schools. It is presumed that: families

and schools want what is best for the child; every child has the right to reach his/her full potential; effective schools provide a nurturing school climate where a child's growth and development are a continuous process; families are the primary agent of their children's education; partnerships are encouraged based on common values, mutual respect and responsibilities; partnerships have been proven to have a great impact on learner outcomes; and partnerships generally aim at improving school and home relationship including learners' behaviour and development.

However, home/school relationships or partnerships are most times challenged by various factors. Most times schools place time-frames that are only suitable for teachers but are not realistic for the parents, especially working parents. In addition, low-income parents may feel incompetent when approached by teachers who are not professional regarding facilitating such non-threatening partnership meeting, and teachers should consider parents' literacy levels. Community/school partnership-programmes could be vital in terms of facilitating such meetings (Australian Government, 2008). Hence, it is important that when we evaluate parental involvement we must consider the parents' capabilities. In his study in Western Australia, Riley (in John, 2009) concluded that parental involvement contributed to school effectiveness.

When studying parental involvement, it is important to take into account the challenges that confront meaningful parental involvement (Christie, 2008; Watson et al., 2012; John, 2009; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). Clearly there are some factors that restrain parents from getting involved in the education of their children. Parents' self-efficacy is the belief that parents have the ability to help their children with regard to achieving success. Garry & Rayleen (2011) point out that parents with high self-efficacy are critical in bringing out positive outcomes from their children, more so than parents with low self-efficacy. In affirmation of that, Holloway et al. (2008) state that parental self-efficacy is one of the main determinants of parental involvement in children's education.

Dauber & Epstein (experts in parent involvement) in Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:18), concludes that parents' education and class status does not influence or limit the level of parental involvement; instead parents are more likely to engage in their children's education if they discover that the school has programmes or plans in place to engage parents at school or at home. This means that the school's culture determines the level of parental involvement. However, studies in many countries reveal the negative effect of families living in poverty has on their children's schooling and academic outcomes (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). In a South

African study, Adams & Waghid (2005) mention that low levels of parents' education and poor economic condition contribute to the lack of parental involvement. Moreover, John (2009) argues that, besides physical requirements such as clothes, proper shelter and food, parents also provide a positive mental and psychological background outside which the child will not experience anxiety. The absence of these important needs becomes a hindrance to a child's development.

Children benefit significantly when parents are effectively involved in their education. Vassallo (2001) assert that parental involvement has a positive impact on learner achievement. Therefore, when parents are actively involved, there are possibilities for positive outcomes regardless of the parents' background. Harris et al. (2009), concurring, mention that parental involvement benefits and improves a child's academic achievements. For example, parental engagement in a child's homework produces higher learner achievement in school. Therefore one may say that accounting for parental capabilities is one of the best ways to analyze parental involvement in the context of this study.

In summary, parental involvement has been highlighted with its significance on children's academic performances. The trending practice of parental involvement over time reveals that there has been a significant increase in the practice of parental involvement. The discussion indicates that parental involvement has improved in many countries over the years, and both teachers and parents play crucial roles in the academic achievement of learner.

2.4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Makhubu (in Qonde, 2000) argues that communities began to demand involvement in school governance in education prior the Union of South Africa when black education was being pioneered by missionaries. During this period, Christianity played a central role in the education of South Africans. According to John (2009), missionaries were at the centre of formal education. Parents supported the education of their children in this era of missionary education. According to Christie (in John, 2009), in those days missionaries helped in South African education then. The missionaries were humane, broadcasting the Christian faith within African societies while introducing education and Western medications. They taught people how to read and write, and to master Christian doctrines.

John (2009) mentioned that missionary education was not very pleasing or welcomed by Africans because it caused division among the black society. Some educated Africans left their

culture and began to follow the Western culture and, in that case, were referred to as the Black Elite.

2.4.1 APARTHEID EDUCATION

The political structure of the apartheid regime during the period after 1948 changed the education system for blacks in South Africa (John, 2009). Apartheid education systematically isolated groups on the basis of racial classification. Additionally, the South African education system has been confronted with various challenges as a direct result of the apartheid regime.

Under the apartheid system the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was introduced in order to segregate black education. The website www.sahistory.org.za (2016:1-5) claims that the introduction of Bantu Education led to a significant increase of government funding to black schools, but did not continue with the increase in population. During those days the main attempt by the government was to include black parents in the management of black education. For the apartheid government, parental involvement was a legitimate attempt to decentralise power and financial responsibility (Qonde, 2000). The Act gave effect for African parents to actively participate in the education of their children.

In the words of Mkhwanazi (1993), the then Minister of Native Affairs declared that 'Black parents in particular should be made co-responsible for their children's education and that co-responsibility is two-fold, it is co-responsibility for the control but associated with that is co-responsibility in respect of finances' (p.2). Therefore the dominant apartheid ideology engaged black schools, through the use of parents, to legitimate its isolated education policies.

Parents had to set up and establish community schools in order for their children to learn. Parents financed and managed the education of their children in a formal education set-up. In that case, children were denied their rights to basic and resourceful education. African children were mistreated, mostly under this Act (John, 2009). Whites were also involved in the education of their children. The government in this era supported white parents through financing the education of their children, building schools and appropriately resourcing the white schools with adequate teaching and learning materials. White children received free books and their education was of first-class quality compared to that of African children (Mkhwanazi, 1993).

The Act also gave room for African parents to get involved in the management of Government Bantu Schools, such as regional and local councils as well as other committee groups. Their

duties ranged from active participation in classroom activities to funding and the general management of their children's education. Christie and Collins (in John, 2009), claim that sometime in 1955 the government passed a law to confine the total running of missionary schools and replace them with state schools. By the year 1965, 509 out of a total number of 722 African schools were state-aided missionary schools.

The Bantu Education Act gave a great deal of power to the then minister of education. For example, the power to have control over teachers, syllabuses, the curriculum and other activities regarding black education. This policy structured the South African education system in two separate departments. One was black education system and the other the white education system. According to John (2009), this Act was criticized by African parents, missionaries and the Black Elite group. The Act was racially inclined, and it was contrary to the Christian norms and values of African societies.

In a nutshell, black parents were not at all pleased with the introduction and implementation of the Bantu Education Act. They felt it was an inferior education created to limit the standard of African education. This period was characterized by riots and school boycotts (Qonde, 2000). Another important aspect of this period was the proclamation by the state of the use of home language as the medium of instructions in schools.

2.4.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE UPRISING OF 1976

Between the middle and late 1970's, the Regional Director of Bantu Education (Northern Transvaal Region), JG Erasmus, decreed the use of an Afrikaans medium of instruction in local schools (the website www.sahistory.org.za, 2016:1-5). The South African students protested against this decree, which forced all black institutions to adopt the use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction. African learners and teachers criticized and rejected the introduction of an Afrikaans medium of instruction because Afrikaans was widely viewed as 'the oppressor's language' (the website www.sahistory.org.za, 2016:1-5). The decree on the use of an Afrikaans medium of instruction in local schools resulted in angry responses from teachers, parents and learners which eventually led to protest by the learners at the Orlando stadium on the morning of June 16, 1976. These event sparked the Soweto Uprising of 1976, which was characterized by violence and unrest which later spread across the whole of South Africa (Behr, 1988:3).

The Board of Committee in Management Councils was made available in order to bring the education situation under control. Yet they could not resolve the problem. Communities and

parental support was crucial in bringing the disorderly situation under control. Innocent lives were lost during the police confrontation with rioters, and schools were vandalized (the website, www.sahistory.org.za, 2016:1-5). According to John (2009), there was disorderliness in most urban schools. However, school operations continued smoothly in some rural schools. In his words, John state that, 'Most educationists called the period between 1976 and 1994 a period of reform' (p.61).

The declaration of the Education and Training Act of 1979 (Act 70 of 1979), which was enforced in January 1980, and which introduced a new law for Black Education, replaced the Bantu Education Act. Also, it tried to abolish the activities of the former education system. The Act enabled parents and the community to participate in the education of their children (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1979). Mkhwanazi (1993:55), asserts that the Education and Training Act of 1979 tried to integrate parents and the school community. In a study conducted during the 1980's, Molteno (1986:80) revealed that parents and communities complained about their lack of power and control over their schools. All the stakeholders in education, such as communities, parents, teachers and learners, combined forces to struggle for a better education system in the 1980's. Schools were used as sites for the struggle for a better transformed educational system. According to Qonde (2000), this development of the 1980's featured constant demands for peoples' education and then led to the beginning of social, political and educational change in South Africa. Sen (1999), sees development as any freedom or policy that encourages development rather than lack of opportunities or social deprivation. Introducing a better education system and allowing parents the opportunity to get involved in education will develop their various capabilities.

2.4.3 EDUCATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC ERA

The victory of the ANC democratic government in 1994 resulted in the creation of an equal education system. With the change in political structure, the newly-elected government made a host of alterations which included equal education for all races (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2008:20). Parents were encouraged to get involved in their children's education by the White Paper Act in 1995. The White Paper on Education and Training was introduced in March 1995. Regarding the parents, the White Paper (1995a) emphasizes the importance of parents/community involvement. The principle of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by becoming involved in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players. 'This is the only guaranteed way to infuse new social energy into the

institutions and structures of the education and training system, dispel the chronic alienation of large sectors of society from the education process, and reduce the power of government administration to intervene where it should not' (p.21-23). The White Paper was concerned with parents and community involvement in their children's education.

The introduction of the Hunter Report Committee to review the organisation, governance and funding of schools came into existence on 31 August 1995. The report provides parents with the duty and power to develop and adopt school policies. Hence, parents could suggest and make decisions for the school's improvement. According to Sen's development as freedom (1999), what people can achieve depends on the political liberty and freedom or opportunities provided for them. The Report (1995), acknowledges parents' rights and responsibilities to become involved in the education of their children. Through the school governing bodies, parents are able to engage in different activities such as maintenance of school buildings, the purchasing of books and materials, and the provision of equipment. In a case whereby parents could not afford such duties, the report maintained that the authority would come with aid on behalf of the governing body (Hunter Report, 1995:57).

In February 1996 Education White Paper No.2, *The organisation Governance and Funding of Schools*, was introduced and was based mainly on the proposal detailed in the Hunter Report. In the White Paper (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996:16) it was suggested that all stakeholders should be actively involved and share responsibilities and encourage tolerance, rational discussion and participatory decision-making. In accordance with the Hunter Report, the White Paper acknowledges that the policy should allow a situation whereby such capacities may be under-developed in some communities. If so, it will need to be structured. According to the White Paper (Department of Education 1996:17), each public school should have a governing body comprised of:

- (i) *Educators*
- (ii) *Learners (in secondary schools only)*
- (iii) *The principal (ex officio)*
- (iv) *Non-teaching staff*
- (v) *Members of the community, elected by the governing body.*

School Governing Bodies in South Africa provide parents with the platform to actively participate in the education of their children. The capability approach framework by Sen

believes that freedom to participate and rights are very effective to human development. Hence, if parents are to be involved in education, their participation would be highly needed.

The South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996, Subsection (16), bestow power to every member of the School Governing Body to actively participate in the administrative and management of every public schools. The policy acknowledges that parents and the community have a great influence regarding school effectiveness. Therefore, the policy encourages parental involvement in order to help the school achieve its goal. Schools would be considered successful by the new government when parents actively participate in teaching and learning activities. The underpinning philosophy of the South African Schools Act 1996 (SASA) is to provide formal power in education to the parents and to the communities. Parental involvement in the education of their children is perceived to be influential regarding children's academic outcomes. But it is also significant in improving parents' sense of empowerment, and it contributes to the greater achievement of valued educational success.

2.5 THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Most countries all over the world have become more diverse due to different factors such as social, economic and political developments (Michael et al., 2012). This also shows in school communities where learners from different backgrounds have increasingly been affected by these factors. The unique circumstances surrounding those schools/communities determine the level of effective parental involvement in such schools/community internationally.

This section commences with study reviews on disadvantaged school communities and concludes with the nature of parental involvement in disadvantaged (low-income) school communities in South Africa.

2.5.1 THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

It is important to consider parental involvement in low-income communities in other parts of the world for a clearer understanding. Considering the relationship between poverty and learner outcomes, a literature in America by Horvatin (2011), has indicated that cultural understanding, a lack of resources in time and money, low-income jobs and poverty have contributed to ineffective parental involvement among African American working-class parents. Those parents experience challenges ranging from low-income jobs, low levels of parents' education, a lack of basic amenities, to inequality amongst the social space. A study in America by Weiss

et al. (2003), indicates that different pressures from work, school and family tend to create a dilemma for minority or low-income parents. These parents desire to be involved in their children's education, although it was most noted by Weiss et al. (2003) that women are most confronted by this problem because they carry the primary responsibility for managing their work and family. This has contributed to their inability to become involved in the education of their children. According to the capability approach framework by Sen, any constraints to capability is seen as unfreedom such as the one mentioned above and so people requires effective capabilities to be able to function in the education of the children.

Cultural backgrounds influence the link between families and school. As pointed out in another American study by Rudnitski in Maluleke (2014), 'parents from racial, ethnic and cultural minorities, especially those of low socio-economic status, tend to feel less affinity for the school than those in the mainstream middle class' (p.43). In other words, education values vary between different racial groups. In addition, the issue of effective language communication in heterogeneous societies plays a role with regard to effective school/home communication. Furthermore, Rudnitski, in Maluleke (2014), argues that through an inability to effectively communicate with the school, traditionally low-income and culturally diverse parents have been marginalized. This is assumed to bring up the feelings of inadequacy, failure and low self-esteem, which are believed to be the reason for less parental involvement from marginalized societies. It is clear that these traditions of ineffective communication and heterogeneous societies attributed to a lack of parental involvement in these school communities.

Jasso, in Watson et al. (2012), argues that the nature of parental involvement varies between ethnicities because of home experiences and the fact that culture affects parental involvement. His study revealed that African American and Hispanic parents were less involved and had no knowledge as to how to help their children, unlike their counterparts. Moreover, it concludes by suggesting that further research should be carried out in order to determine why there was issue of less parental involvement, and develop solutions. He further stated that different variables such as parents' low levels of education, poverty, lack of resources and 'teachers' negative attitudes' might have played a role to the problem. Watson et al. (2012), on the other hand, states that poor working-class parents had less time to participate in their children's education because they lacked time. Trotman (2001) reflected on the lack of African American parental involvement which has resulted in the low academic performances of their children. These parents usually reside in poverty. In order to improve the involvement of these parents, schools need to create outreach programmes designed for inclusive partnerships.

From the ongoing literature, it is clear that parental involvement is ineffective in disadvantaged African American school communities because of various restricting factors such as culture and ethnicity, parents' low levels of education, poverty and low-income jobs. These findings will be relevant to the current study because of the fact that the study sought to explore teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in low-income school communities, and the barrier factors to parental involvement.

2.5.2 THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Much has been done by the current political regime since the demise of apartheid-education ideologies. For example, a series of policies by the democratic government have been directed towards poverty alleviation and equal-education systems (Maarman, 2009). However, Collet (2013), argues that in spite of the introduction of these policies, the implementations were poor. These policies have been introduced to address the existing inequalities in society. Yet, despite the imperative, low-income school communities that lack adequate resources are still challenged by a range of poverty factors (Vuyisile, 2012). South African blacks, among the low-income communities, today face different poverty challenges that are as a direct result of controversial apartheid history.

Researchers have shown that political structures and disharmonious relationships among all stakeholders of school communities include poor socio-economic conditions, such as a lack of resources; and poverty contributes to a lack of parental involvement in dysfunctional schools in South Africa. Conditions such as a lack of resources and poverty were noted as key factors contributing to a lack of effective parental involvement in disadvantaged school communities in South Africa (Maluleke, 2014; Qonde, 2000; Michael et al., 2012; John, 2009). According to Qonde (2000), controversy over the education system has been a regular feature of South African schools. There has always been the problem of parental involvement, especially in black rural schools in South Africa (Matshe, 2014). Also, research has confirmed these conditions (Christie, 1985; HSRC, 2005). According to Matshe (2014), the history of parental involvement in black rural communities was complicated due to the past apartheid regime.

Ndlazi's findings, in Matshe (2014), reflects on the significant impact of historical, political, economic, social and educational structures in the non-involvement of parents from rural schools. These parents said that factors such as a lack of finance, work commitments, illiteracy and poverty were the reasons for not being fully involved in the education of their children.

Considering the fact that most parents from rural areas lacked a sound education, they do not understand how to help in their children's education. These factors played a role in limiting their involvement. In a similar tone, Matshe (2014), asserts that in low-income school communities, the parents' lack of the required skills, materials, requisite levels of education or knowledge, and poor economic conditions, may have contributed to less parental involvement in the education of their children. According to Sen (1999), economic unfreedom and social unfreedom can foster a lack of parental or family involvement. This is the reason one has to consider parental capabilities in parental involvement matters.

According to the research, a low level of parental involvement is common among economically disadvantaged societies, socially deprived groups and ethnic minority families (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Ho, 2002). Studies by Siririka (2007) found that parents with low levels of education have the desire to help their children but are restricted because they believe they lack the capacity to help due to their low levels of education. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) and Maluleke (2014), confirm this condition in respect of another developing country such as South Africa. On the other hand, in developed countries such as the United States of America or Japan, parents are actively involved in the education of their children because they are adequately educated to support the education of their children (Holloway et al., 2008).

Research on the topic of parental involvement in the Vhembe district in Limpopo by Maluleke, (2014), has found that ineffective parental involvement has been a regular feature of black parents because of their illiteracy and ignorance. Parents from these communities are affected by socio-economic factors. Therefore, they pay no attention to their children's schooling because they go to work during school days and return home over the weekend. Some parents work on the farms, while some work in the town of Makhado as domestic workers (Maluleke, 2014).

Another research conducted in the Kwa-Mashu school community by Mxumalo in John (2009), mentions that parents agreed that they feared to enforce discipline on their children. They also claimed that they were not supportive and, also, that they were demotivated to take part in school activities. In spite of the poor state of the school environment, the study further indicates that parents should play a key role in order to restore a quality teaching and learning culture, promote effective communication between homes and school, and exercise positive discipline with regard to their children. Restrictive factors such as ignorance, fear of teachers and parents' socio-economic status strongly reduce the effective development of the home/school

relationship. These social conditions have restrained learners in disadvantaged school communities from receiving a better education, and have prevented the parents from participating in the education of their children (Bernhardt, 1998; Sibilanga, 2002). Even though the democratic government encourages inclusive partnerships, the legacy of apartheid still lingers in disadvantaged communities (Department of Education, 1995). Thus there is a need to empower parents regarding the education of their children. Additionally, the findings of Lease (2004) also reveal that African American communities, as well as Africans from disadvantaged communities, also have less involvement in their children's education.

Low-income communities are comprised of township communities which are characterized by low-income households, mostly with unemployed parents, insufficient educational resources, a lack of facilities and an inappropriate living environment (Bernhardt, 1998). These conditions are as a result of the socio-political activities that prevailed during the apartheid era and had a negative impact on parents' capabilities. In addition to this, most of these parents received a poor-quality education. Bernhardt (1998), further states that disadvantaged parents are referred to as parents from low-income communities; they are geographically disadvantaged due to factors such as low-income jobs, a lack of facilities or a lack of good shelter plus and low level of parents' education. Parents from such communities need support on how to use available resources to strengthen their capabilities as they have been restrained by several poverty factors. From the on-going literature, it is clear that parental involvement is ineffective in former disadvantaged school communities, referred to in this research as low-income communities, because of various restricting factors such as parents' low levels of education, poverty and low-income jobs. These findings will be relevant to the current study because of the fact that the study sought to explore teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in low-income school communities (a case), and the barrier factors to parental involvement.

2.6 TEACHERS' VIEWS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

According to Shearer (2006), most often teachers view parental involvement as being primarily school-home communication, while others stress the essence of parents supporting school activities within the home environment. The explanation of the term 'parental involvement' has left some teachers' in a confused state due to the different perspectives that are associated with the term 'parental involvement'.

In a study of parental involvement, Barge & Loges (2003) conducted open-ended questions, exploring teachers' perceptions of what constitutes effective parental involvement. A majority

of the teachers' responses were categorized into four themes, which includes: communication; participating in the child's school and the child's development; discipline, in the form of supporting punishment overseen by the school; and basic parental responsibilities, including supervision of the child.

The number-one theme, 'communication', refers to parents' ability to contact teachers and open a channel of effective communication. Examples include having contact with teachers on a regular basis, school visitations, and phone calls. The theme 'participation' refers to ways that parents could have discussions with their children that will improve a learner's academic activities. Teachers mention that the most frequent forms of participation as parents are helping with homework, participating in school activities, and attending PTA meetings. Discipline or punishment was mentioned moderately by the teachers as one of the four ways of effective parental involvement, but teachers have one clear view of where discipline is effective – parents' approval of the use of punishment at the school. Supervision/parenting was mentioned by the teachers as another theme that emerged from the questions but, surprisingly, different forms of supervision were mentioned by the teachers, with no clear reference to supervision. Teachers' perspectives were diverse in this theme. Teachers refer to parental involvement as parents ensuring good nutrition, providing a good shelter for learning, and providing resources such as books and clothes. This may be due to the low socio-economic status of parents in that geographical zone.

In a South African study by Michael et al. (2012), teachers reported that parents were responsible for financing education; this included buying stationery and school uniforms, and paying school fees for their children. Teachers further claim that parents should get involved by ensuring that their children keep to the school code of conduct and participate in school fund-raising activities. Another teacher in their study argued that parental involvement should include effective participation in classroom activities.

However, in another study, Levine (2002) focused on teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and parents' influence on a child's literacy skills. The majority of the participant teachers agreed that parents' involvement is essential but parents' opinions were still not addressed. In Levine's interview, several questions were posed by teachers, such as: is it of much importance to integrate parents into a classroom setting? And, how do parents become involved? Teachers in the study agreed that parents are a child's first and most important teachers. And also, that the learner's attitude towards learning was developed from the family's

home. Teachers in the interview believed that literacy activities such as reading, working on a computer, supervising homework and discussing school-related activities are the activities being expected of parents.

Baker et al. (1999), in their study of teachers' understanding of parental involvement, revealed that due to the complex nature of parental involvement, teachers find it difficult to explain parental involvement. The study indicated that teachers did not know about the actual amount of involvement that occurs outside the school environment. Thoughtful and strategic programmes or coordinated planning should be put in place by the schools or authorities to ensure meaningful parental involvement. Meanwhile, South African teachers, in Michael et al. (2012), mention that written communication such as newsletters, letters containing learners' progress, or term-end letters to inform parents of scheduled meetings and school programmes were adopted. However, one parent complained that such letters are, most times, unproductive due to the school being dependant on a learner's delivery. Moreover, the English language is used during school meetings. The use of English as medium of communication becomes a problem to parents who cannot read or write in English language, and sometimes learners do not deliver such letters (Michael et al., 2012:27). Some of the problems with regards to parental involvement have been caused beyond the parents' ability like the above mentioned problems. Parental involvement also means volunteering by the parents.

Regarding parents acting as volunteers, Michael et al. (2012) found that teachers used parent volunteers as part of parental involvement, such as the maintenance of school structures, fixing the learning equipment and (Comer, 2000:23) assisting where help is needed. Teachers expect parents to assist in volunteering by supporting the maintenance of the school. Regarding the participant parents in the study, the majority of these parents mentioned that they were too busy with other issues concerning their own lives.

In order to encourage parental involvement, many schools have set up a programme for increasing parental involvement. Van Wyk (2001), in Nadine et al. (2008), in his findings revealed that 74% of teachers in primary schools affirmed that their school had a policy that involved parents in their children's learning activities at home – unlike Michael et al. (2012) who found a lack of a documented policy on parental involvement in three researched schools in South Africa. The schools did not deem it necessary for such a documented policy. One principal claimed that a bulletin titled *the right of parents*, which is shared among every new enrolment learner, is enough.

An official school document (book) was considered as one of the ways of creating links between the schools and homes (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2004 in Nadine et al., 2008), though only four out of the sampled seven schools agreed that they actually adopted the same way of linking schools and homes. From their questionnaires, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2004, in Nadine et al., 2008) revealed that only 58% out of 242 questionnaires distributed amongst the schools actually showed that only this 58% among these schools had a written homework policy which was dispensed among the parents. It was assumed by the study that homework is one among many ways in which home/school partnerships could be built, but they did not look at teachers' attitudes towards the ability of parents to help in their children's homework. In this current study, how the teachers perceive parents' ability to help their children with homework is essential, as it is one of the objectives of this study to establish teachers' perceptions of what comprises parental involvement.

According to Nadine et al. (2008), homework is a literacy activity that involves the influence of home and school. The South African Schools Act disperses school management (Nadine et al., 2008). This will enable parents to effectively participate in the education of their children. However, in a South African, study Singh & Mbokodi (2004) revealed that black parents from disadvantaged (low-income) school communities do not believe that they have the capacity to help their children with homework. They further claim that many teachers no longer assign homework to the learners because the teachers felt that there was no available help coming from homes. Also, their study indicated from a different location (the affluent societies) that parents could phone in and ask questions regarding anything they were unsure about. In other words, parents call the school to gain clarification in order to effectively get involved in their children's education. They (Singh & Mbokodi, 2004) also found attributes of mental process in school B locations (low-income school communities) where teachers reported that parents: 'can do absolutely nothing', 'can't help', 'won't understand'.

Kralovec and Buell, in Nadine et al. (2008), argue that parents from low-income school communities are most times undermined by the teachers, such act made the voices of the parents not to be heard. This reflects in their findings where teachers use negative phrase such as 'parents who can do absolutely nothing', 'parents don't have information', 'parents can't help children', 'parents don't understand the homework', and 'parents don't come'. Such indicate that parental involvement is not expected in such school community. However, parent-teacher discussions were suggested as part of parental involvement. According to Sen (1993), considering peoples' freedom when evaluating parents' capability makes it more interesting.

Judging from the literature of Nadine et al., parents' freedom or capabilities has been tampered when their voices were not heard.

Masiye (2012), in a South African study, reported that teachers complained about poor performances of Grade 4 learners. This is attributed to those learners being introduced to subjects that they are doing for the first time. The learners struggle to keep up with some of these new subjects. Teachers in the study reported that issues of this nature can be addressed by having a discussion with parents so that their attention will be drawn to the poor performances of learners in certain subjects. In this case, parents can set up ways on how to help their children, such as buying books, creating a conducive learning environment, or reading out loud to the learners so that they can familiarize themselves with the subject.

Another teacher in the study by Masiye (2012) highlighted the importance of parental involvement. The teacher, like many teachers in the study, believed that when parents give support by helping their children with schoolwork at home, the children's academic performances increase. In other words, parental involvement influences learner outcomes. Parental involvement is crucial regarding a child's development. For instance, a teacher claims that if a learner becomes fully aware of a mutual relationship between his or her parent and the teacher, that learner would tend to be more focused on his or her study (Masiye, 2012:59). The perception of this teacher on parental involvement shows that when parents become involved, learners have the tendency to perform positively.

Research has revealed that young learners are more successful if their parents are effectively engaged at school, and encourage education and learning at home regardless of the parents' level of education or social class (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009:15). Levine (2002) highlights that the importance of home- and school-based parental involvement should be encouraged because: a positive message is communicated to learners about the value of their education; parents stay informed of their child's academic performance; teachers are able to accomplish more; increased children's attitude of learning; improved parents and child relationship; learners' academic achievement is improved; relationship among parents and teachers is improved; learners are successful in both academically and improved learners' behaviour.

It is clear from the above discussion that teachers' perceptions of parental involvement vary. Parental involvement takes two dimensions that overlap the influence of both the school and home environments. Children benefit significantly when parents are effectively involved in their education.

2.7 BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Scholars or researches exist about the significance of parental involvement in their children's education outcomes. Studies have shown that parental involvement not only enhances a learner's academic achievement, but also contributes to a higher quality of education. Yet both teachers and parents struggle with how to make that involvement happen. Thus, this leads to the question: if parental involvement is vital to a student's academic attainment, why is it so difficult to achieve? Some segments of the answer to this question are provided in this section which conceptualizes barriers which hinder parental involvement. A review of the literature identified various factors that play a role, such as poverty, parents'/teachers' attitudes, the child factor, school barriers, cultural barriers, resources and logistics barriers, and parents' socio-economic status.

2.7.1 POVERTY

In homes or schools where there is significant parental involvement, an assessment regarding the ability of parents to support their children's education needs are essential to determine whether parents can effectively get involved in their children's education. Thus, recognizing the impact of poverty on parental involvement is deemed necessary. Exploring into poverty should provide data about the true realities of a particular society. In this case it is therefore necessary to explore the real situation of learners from low-income school communities and parenting, including the relationship between the poverty realities of parenting because a lack of parental involvement affects the child's schooling.

Poverty can be seen in two dimensions: 'absolute poverty' and 'relative poverty'. Also, a number of related concepts have been used, such as hardship, social exclusion, and social capital (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2003). These are not one and the same with poverty; these are seen as essential in explaining the relationship between parental involvement and poverty, especially when applying the capability approach. According to Maarman (2009), the poverty definition varies based on the purpose of the project, the nature of the data and scope in measuring poverty. Individual parents and groups in a society can be said to be living in poverty when they lack sufficient resources, when they lack participation in the mainstream societies, or when they lack appropriate living environment or knowledge that can enhance their well-being (Sen, 1999).

Studies in many countries showed the negative effect of families, living in poverty, on their children's education and academic outcomes (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). Some of the sub-

Saharan African countries constitute communities living in poverty settings, with children often lacking active parental involvement in their education (Ngwaru, 2012). Furthermore, in a South African study, Adams & Waghid (2005) mention that a low level of education and poor economic conditions contribute to a low level of parental involvement. Hence, the issue of poverty seems to be the main reason for the problem of ineffective parental involvement. It has, however, been discovered that parents in low-income school communities lack effective engagement with regard to the expectations of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996) for the progression of quality public education. Christie, in Daniel-Oghenetega (2010), emphasizes the negative effect that poverty has on children's academic outcomes because schooling involves direct costs, such as learning materials and uniforms.

Poverty is a huge problem in a South African context; it is also deep-rooted and of great concern because of the legacy of apartheid which led to the exclusion of the black race. During the apartheid regime, white-race education was provided with the lion's share of allocated state resources (Mokubung in Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). The effect of the apartheid regime is still in existence, especially in black societies which were discriminated against and denied access to the basic needs of life – as seen in the pronouncement of the Land Act policy which resulted in the establishment of townships such as the location of this study (Teppo & Houssay-Holzschuch, 2013). These townships are establishments based on the segregation policies of the apartheid government, and are characterized by informal dwellings and a low socio-economic status. Therefore, this period contributed to creating poverty amongst the black society and which is the focal point of this research as it attempts to address the problem of less parental involvement. Researchers affirm that the level of parental involvement is lower in low-income school communities than that of higher-income areas (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; O'Connor, 2001). This is one reason why indicators of growing inequality and prevalent poverty should be assessed with an immediate intervention policy in order to contain the situation. A framework for analyzing poverty must account for social change/history as well as economic and political background of the society. For this reason, the capability approach was employed in this study.

2.7.2 ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

Attitudinal barriers are caused by different factors. One of the factors is parents' low level of education resulting in a lack of requisite skills to become involved in the learning of their children in both the school and home. Garry & Rayleen (2011), in their findings, pinpoint that low-level educated parents find it difficult to get involved in their children's education because

they feel they are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to help in their children's school activities. They are not positive about their role in their children's education. Singh & Mbokodi (2004), in a South African study, also have revealed that black parents did not participate in their children's education due to uncertainty about their role. The lack of information and skills in former disadvantaged communities was as a result of the parents' low literacy levels and lack of basic knowledge. This, however, reflects the effects of the apartheid legacy in South Africa. Black communities did not have access to appropriate education and good jobs. Lease (2004), in America, discovered that African Americans, like black South Africans, were less informed in terms of educational activities compared to European Americans. Thus, their children experience ineffective parental involvement in school. According to the capability approach, social freedom and social opportunities, equity, political freedom and furthermore helps to advance an individual's general capabilities. In the absence of all these freedom, parents' capabilities or involvement in education may suffer. Another issue that contributed to the problems of parental involvement is language.

Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) stated that language differences between parents and teachers are perceived as barrier factors, with parents feeling that the language of teaching and learning should be a second language. Language such as English makes it difficult for parents to effectively communicate with the school. Parents who have had a poor education shy away from communicating with teachers. In order to create effective means of communication between parents and teachers, schools should use the support of a translator during meetings and conferences. Alternatively, schools should write letters using the parents' native language if the parents cannot read or understand English.

According to Garry & Rayleen (2011), some parents may lack the confidence to help their children due to the language of instruction, which possibly may not be their first language. Therefore they may feel that they cannot effectively communicate with the teachers. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) assert that parents may avoid school contact because they do not understand the high level of language used by the teachers at school. Moreover, Clark in Garry & Rayleen (2011) found that what differentiated successful learners from low-income black school communities is that the parents of those learners believed in the principles of parental involvement in the education of their children. They provide adequate home-learning support and effectively communicate with the school. Clark concluded that parents of successful learners had a higher belief and expectation than their counterparts. They believe that they could effectively get involved in the education of their children so that their children can be

successful at school. Parents' beliefs regarding their ability to help their children achieve positive outcomes are seen as key to effective parental involvement.

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, in Garry & Rayleen (2011), note that parents who lack the belief that they can be influential in the education of their children tend to avoid school meetings because they believe that their involvement will not be productive in terms of positive learner outcomes. In another study Matshe (2014), reports that most of the participant parents agreed that, because of a lack of requisite knowledge and skills, they do not have the capacity to assist in their children's education. Such a barrier resulted to a lack of parental involvement in schools. Being uncomfortable because of a lack of a good educational level, compared to that of the teachers, may hinder parents from visiting the school (Shearer, 2006). In other words, an inferiority complex has a way of preventing parental involvement. Shearer further mentions that the low literacy of parents may affect their belief in whether or not they have the capacity to help in the education of their children.

Parents' self-efficacy is the belief that parents have the ability to help their children with regard to achieving positive results. Garry & Rayleen (2011) argues that parents with high self-efficacy are critical to bringing out positive outcomes from their children. On the other hand, low parental self-efficacy hinders meaningful parental involvement. In affirmation, Holloway et al. (2008) state that parental self-efficacy is one of the main elements of parental involvement in children's education. It has been suggested that teachers' attitudes also can influence the degree of parental involvement in a child's learning.

According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), parents get involved in their children's schooling when they see that teachers value their involvement. In other words, the attitude of the teachers towards parental involvement matters to the parents. The widespread use of the term 'partnership' at all levels in institutions defines home and school assimilation, however, it seems to be low at some schools. This is because studies have indicated that teachers look down upon the parents due to their shortcomings. Teachers see parents as problems, vulnerable or incapable (Garry & Rayleen, 2011). Shearer (2006) concurs that some teachers' perceptions of less-educated parents as parents with little or nothing to offer in terms of their children's education, may lead to a lack of parents' self-efficacy. Parents with a low level of education tend to experience an inferiority complex regarding the education of their children. This feeling could be lifted when parents become partners in the education of their children, and when teachers begin to show regard for parental involvement. According to Sen (1993), the capability

of an individual parent reflects a combination of functioning of such a person. Thus, functioning here includes the ability to command or to be respected. When parents are not shown respect, their confidence or capabilities are lost. Additionally, deferent goals between parents and teachers concerning parental involvement can act as a barrier factor to effective parental involvement.

Watson et al. (2012), asserts that teachers require and assume more responsibilities/involvement that once were performed by parents. This often becomes a barrier to parental involvement. Moreover, Weiss et al. (2003) suggests that various responsibilities, such as work, family and school, contribute to creating a dilemma for low-income families. Furthermore, Bagarette (2011) argues that many teachers undermine the parents' status, functions and roles in school. Certainly, from the above discussion, teachers' attitudes also affect parental involvement both negatively and positively. The attitudes of teachers to parental involvement will determine the level of parental involvement at school.

2.7.3 CHILD BARRIERS

Garry & Rayleen (2011) have revealed that there are children who are less keen about school involvement, such as parents' school visits. This is because some adolescents want to be independent. Watson et al. (2012), note that children can pose a barrier to parental involvement as they try to be autonomous. Thus, such children see parental involvement as interfering in their affairs. Research has shown that children in their early years, to a great extent, attract parental involvement. Parental involvement is likely to be high for parents of younger children due to how much younger children depend on their parents (Garry & Rayleen, 2011:43; Watson et al., 2012:44). Older children are less concerned about parental involvement due to adolescents trying to be independent. These indicate that some parents' capabilities can also be affected by the child's factor. Furthermore, the United States Department of Education (1994) has revealed that the level of parental involvement drops by the time children reach adolescent age. Meanwhile, Kristin & Grace (2009) assert that parental involvement is at a higher level in a female child's schooling compared to that of a male child, and that it also declines as the child gets older. Kimu (2012), in a study in Kenya, also mentions that parental involvement decreases when learners are promoted to higher grades because of the fact that different grades require deferent levels of involvement. This may be due to a change of curriculum which may become more demanding as a child progresses to a higher grade. It has also been suggested that children with behavioural problems can contribute to the problem of parental involvement.

According to Garry & Rayleen (2011), parents of children who have behavioural problems can turn away from their children's school due to a fear of receiving further complicated news. There is always a negative influence between parental involvement and the issues of a learner's behaviour. In such a situation, the more the behavioural issues the less parental involvement in the schooling of such a child. Certainly, in the case of a learner's behavioural problem, the school may decide to suspend such a learner. Garry & Rayleen (2011) assert that clashes between parents and schools become unavoidable in such situations, which also pose as a barrier to parental involvement. In most cases, parental involvement tends to be at a higher level on the mother's side than that of the father's.

A study in Kenya confirms this. Kimu (2012) note that mothers are crucial determinant factors when it comes to parental involvement. The study reveals that mothers are involved in their child's homework and in preparing the child for school because the fathers were away at work. Meanwhile, Singh & Mbokodi (2004) found in a South African context that effective parental involvement is more likely to be integrated in families where the mothers had formal education. This is consistent with research findings highlighting the importance of maternal education in parental involvement (Watson et al., 2012). Working parents find it difficult to find the time to become involved in the education of their children. Kristin & Grace (2009) assert that time is a key determinant factor of parental involvement. They further state that part-time working mothers tend to get involved in the education of their children more than mothers who work full-time. However, in spite of all these hindrances to effective parental involvement, Siririka, (2007) found that parents still have the desire to help their children.

2.7.4 EXPECTATION BARRIERS

The expectations of teachers, parents and children may differ and so they may not be compactable.

The degree of expectations that teachers have for parents is sometimes beyond the parents' capabilities (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009:13). It is acknowledged that some parents struggle to fulfil some of these expectations by the teachers, yet no programme is put in place to enhance the capacity of the concerned parents. Teachers demand that parents should ensure that children complete their homework without suggesting ways in which the parents can be assisted to fulfil this expectation(s). Parents need adequate information concerning their children's homework and, thus, this poses a problem to the parents, the teachers and the children as well. According to Sen (1999), development requires the elimination of parents' unfreedom such that will allow

them the opportunity to take part in the education of their children. Watson et al. (2012) assert that even parents have the ability to be involved in their children's education although they are not sure of the type of assistance they can offer because teachers often do not communicate with them on how they can become involved. As a result the two parties end up blaming each other.

According to Garry & Rayleen (2011), different perceptions regarding goals and expectations tend to cause disagreements which in turn hinder parental involvement. In other words, this will lead to both parties working towards achieving their different expectations as they are working at cross purposes. Garry & Rayleen (2011) state that communication between the two parties and their various roles are constantly made worse by opposing expectations and values. Most times, separating goals and values negatively affects parental involvement. Therefore, having a clear understanding of these underlying expectations gives one insight into the complexities that are associated with parental involvement.

2.7.5 INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

The communication gap between school-to-home and home-to-school is one of the major barriers regarding parental involvement. Schools should have effective means of communication, like information on school programmes and a learner's academic progress. Some parents do not have sufficient communication about how to help their children at home with the school-related curriculum. In that case parents become frustrated (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009:27). Additionally, Matshe (2014:100) point out a lack of honest and two-way communication between schools and homes. There is evidence of written communication. For example, schools communicate with parents through newsletters, letters and memoranda. Matshe further states that using such methods is admirable. However, it can only be seen as a one-way communication channel. Hence, it is suggested that schools should create time for parent/school contact, such as conferences, meetings, school involvement programmes and home visits. In other words, it is vital that schools should develop a means of effective two-way communication between schools and homes. Studies also found that some schools look down on the parents.

Garry & Rayleen (2011), state that some parents are looked down upon by schools and teachers. Watson et al. (2012) and Garry & Rayleen (2011) include school-imposed barriers such schools not contacting parents until a problem arises; for example, learner behavioural problems. They further argue that such contact in terms of a child's behavioural problems will certainly lead to

conflict or disagreement between the parents of such children and the school. Such do not or will not administer effective parental involvement. Parental involvement can also, be challenged by many barrier factors such as poor parental education or poor home/school communication channels and so forth.

Matshe (2014:101) found many barriers that limit effective parental involvement in low-income school communities in South Africa. Such barrier factors range from poor parents' education and poor channels of communication to language issues, time factors and poverty as well as low socio-economic factors. Matshe (2014:101) expresses the realities relating to these barriers and further suggests that schools must employ mechanisms to ensure they help parents to be able to play a role in the education of their children so that the children's performances can be improved as well as their future lives. Many parents in the study by Matshe (2014:101) have identified factors that play a role in restricting them from adequately participating in the learning process of their children. These include a lack of skills and of effective or informative communication, insufficient resources and an unsupportive environment. They (parents) call for schools and the appropriate authorities to create an enabling environment that will help them to actively become involved in the education of their children.

2.7.6 CULTURAL BARRIERS

Meaningful family involvement can be vital to children's academic performances. Research by Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:10) reveals that children benefit when school and family are involved in their education. Barriers to parental involvement can come from both sides of families and school. Some of the barriers are due to a lack of resources, while some are caused by the different perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of families and schools (Lintos, 1992).

According to Shearer (2006), cultural differences can be a barrier to meaningful parental involvement. This can occur due to conflicts in different cultures, values and beliefs, including a lack of knowledge or skills plus a lack of training, family limitations, time factors, a language barrier or a lack of confidence. Both school and homes may lack the ability to develop a school/home partnership. There are barriers regarding culture and ethnicity. Garry & Rayleen (2011) reported the problem concerning the parental involvement of New Zealand immigrant parents from the Pacific Islands. They highlighted how impossible it is in terms of understanding these problems. For instance, there was no programme or training of any kind on how to incorporate these Pacific cultures. There is a strong meaning attached to lineage and social class in the background of this culture. It is believed that lineage and culture are within

the family realm, while education is believed to belong in the realm of schools. It is also presumed that there will be less involvement except when there is an inclusive support from the school and the community.

Young, in Garry & Rayleen (2011), conducted a research on the impact of culture in building trust between Mexican-Americans and public schools in America. The study reveals the 'existence or absence of trust between the home and the school affect the development and sustenance of meaningful parental involvement' (p.12). The findings also note the significant roles of culture, expectations and values on how trust is understood and built. It also suggests taking into consideration the importance of culture and ethnicity in parental involvement. Sen (1993) states that functioning are those beings and doings of an individual, they also include an individual's values such as culture. In their words, Garry & Rayleen (2011) states that 'failure to understand the impact of ethnicity on parental involvement and to incorporate programmes that are genuinely inclusive of other cultures is probably another reason why the practice of involving parents in schools is typically less effective than it could be' (p.42). Differences in language have also been mentioned as a barrier factor to parental involvement.

Uncertainty about schools and the role of parents may become a barrier for parents of different ethnicities (Comer, 2000). Parents who have been educated and raised in a different ethnicity or who do not speak English as their first language may have difficulties in understanding the school's curriculum and expectations. Additionally, these parents may find it difficult to help their children at home (Comer, 2000). In order to help such parents overcome these barriers or become an integral part of the education of their children, schools should design programmes. For example, training programmes to train both the parents and the teachers on the area of parental involvement including holding workshops in different languages and forming inclusive partnerships. Research by Hill & Chao (2009) has explored ways to link the break in continuity on culture that can take place in both home and school experiences of Mexican-origin children. The difference between the home and school environments of these children is depicted in language disparities which hinder effective communication among learners, parents and teachers. Furthermore, parents with different cultural backgrounds may not have adequate education at the same time; they may not be familiar with the system of education in America.

In addition, Bird (2007), argues that there is a culture of poverty which differs from the rest of society. The culture of the poor is characterized by negligence and divergent attitudes, values and behaviour. 'Poverty is perpetuated through low levels of education, lack of participation in

the mainstream society and the inherent socio-psychological, political and economic traits of the poor themselves' (P.9). It is clear from the above discussion that when parents and teachers come from different cultures there is a tendency towards misconception, which in turn hinders effective parental involvement.

2.7.7 RESOURCES AND LOGISTICAL BARRIERS

An insufficiency of resources of various kinds impacts negatively on parental involvement. A good level of parental education may certainly or likely lead to better earnings, which in turn is likely to elicit better parenting. A study by Fram (2003) on high income receiving American parents found that such parents are highly involved in the education of their children, therefore, avoids low level of parental involvement. Garry & Rayleen (2011), agree with the above statement, they argue that a lack of parental involvement can be linked to a lack of good level of parental education which can guarantee quality skills and knowledge to help in their children's learning. Singh & Mbokodi (2004) found that parents, with a poor educational background, lack the ability to become involved in their children's education. Also they are likely to avoid contact with the school, thinking that getting involved will not have a positive effect on their children's education. This means that such parent's lack of a good or high level of education has deprived them the ability to develop skills and knowledge so that they can participate in the learning of their children. Most Parents in South Africa are confronted by various challenges such as lack of skills and knowledge which restrict them from becoming involved in the education of their children. It is suggested that literacy is central to poverty reduction (Ngwaru, 2012). Certainly, a lack of material resources negatively affects parental involvement. According to Sen (1999), social facilities such as good education and economic opportunities enhances peoples' freedom. The freedom or capabilities of the parents could be improved by providing the necessary facilities to enable parental involvement in education.

According to Ngwaru (2012), children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds run the greatest risk of failing to progress in school. This is due to a lack of scholastic material resources. Resource-deprived homes struggle to buy materials. Hill & Chao (2009:153) lamented over how a lack of home facilities, such as access to the Internet or libraries and text books, and a suitable learning environment coupled with no transportation and so forth, can become a stumbling block to parental involvement. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) highlight the importance of materials such as computers, libraries, reading books, transportation and an enabling environment to effective parental involvement. The majority of participants – added in the Reviewed Ministerial Committee Report in the Department of Education 2004, in Van

Wyk (2007) – linked factors such as a lack of transportation, the long distance between home and school, and the time factor regarding meetings with the school to be the reason why there was a lack of parental involvement in schools. In another study by Van Wyk (2007), parents included societal issues, like poverty and the outbreak of HIV/AIDS in the community. Such factors contributed to the problem of parental involvement. The evidence in these reports has indicated how such societal issues can negatively influence the capability of parents. The functioning of parents is affected by wider societal factors that are clustered with social exclusion from mainstream society, neglect and racism. The study adopted the framework ‘capability approach’ to explore these factors, including the programmes that have been recommended to help low-income families to become involved in the education of their children.

Concerning the issues of access and equity, Hill & Chao (2009) have examined the chances of ‘Internet-based family-school communication across a range of family background characteristics’. They indicate that families with high levels of income and high levels of education are not only presented with the chance of having access to the Internet, but also were involved in communicating with the school through the use of the Internet. Moreover, the study reveals that Hispanic families have less or no access to the Internet and, when they do, they are likely not to communicate with the school because they are not well educated. Income was a key determinant of access to the Internet for African Americans in the study compared to other families. Income and education have their separate effects on access to the Internet. According to Hill & Chao (2009) ‘One benefit is that Internet-based communication can reduce some barrier to traditional forms of communication, particularly those that are related to time and scheduling’ (p.151). Home-school Internet communication can open doors to effective two-way communication. It can be quick and reliable and it can limit the issue of the time factor, but poor families cannot afford the Internet or the accessories. Policy makers can improve parental involvement through initiatives such as inclusive education.

Garry & Rayleen (2011) add political factor as a barrier to parental involvement. They argue that government should follow involvement policies with active implementation actions and effective strategies; for example, distribution of information, strategic implementation and training. ‘Government failure in these areas results in a lack of consistency in approach, the implementation of PI policy being fragmented and therefore barriers to PI remaining in place’ (p.49). Parents with a lack of resources or a poor environment most times feel overwhelmed.

According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), the lack of supportive environment contributes to low levels of parental involvement in schools. The high rate of poverty and the concentration on poverty, crime and violence in some particular communities deprives children of ‘opportunities at home and after school’ (p.18). Families with a lack of resources concentrate on meeting their needs first, such as food, shelter and clothing, before they consider becoming involved in their children’s schooling (Comer, 2000:155). Van Wyke and Lemmer (2009) state that most disadvantaged (low-income) communities lack ‘easy access to libraries, cultural institutions, health services and recreation’ (p.18). Van Wyk & Lemmer further claim that, due to the fear of crime and the high cost of public transport to travel to schools in their communities, parents may become discouraged to take a trip to school meetings and other programmes. Dauber & Epstein, in Van Wyke and Lemmer (2009:18), conclude by saying that regardless of parents’ socio-economic status, family size and the willingness of children to learn, parents tend to become involved in the education of their children only if they receive an invitation and encouragement from the school. In other words, the school will determine the level of parental involvement based on the policy on ground regarding parental involvement.

From the foregoing it seems certain that resource-based and logistic barriers, to a great extent, limit parental involvement in their children’s education. It is important to evaluate barriers to parental involvement so that schools and teachers can take into account these barriers in making plans for effective parental involvement.

2.7.8 SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS

Several family-demographic variables such as socio-economic status, maternal status and child variables are also determinants of effective parental involvement (Garry & Rayleen, 2011). The United States Department of Education (1994) found that low income is caused by resource deprivation which, in turn, intersects with the learner’s academic outcomes. Research indicates that an individual parent’s socio-economic status is a significant factor to a child’s academic success. Shearer (2006), in her studies on parental involvement, argues that education is strongly linked to income and other constituents of socio-economic status. The findings suggest that educated parents tend to escape poverty and, at the same time, are likely to secure their children’s education. On the other hand, Garry & Rayleen (2011) assert that parent’s work status, and the kinds of job they do, may become a barrier to efficient parental involvement. They argue further that some kinds of job may give the parents the chance or opportunity to participate in home-based parental involvement, while some jobs do not allow such time. However, the United States Department of Education (1994) emphasizes the importance of

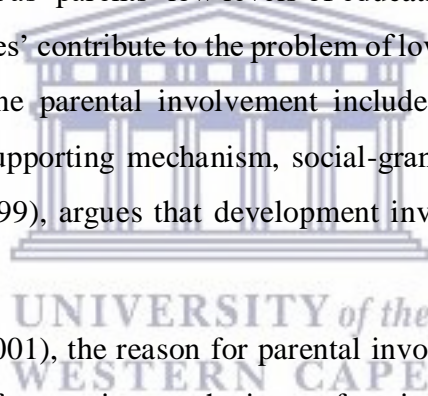
parental involvement by identifying family variables such as income, education level and work status as being determinants of effective parental involvement. Although most studies continue to link income, occupation and the level of parental education to some amount of parental involvement, it is crucial to take note of the factors that played a role. An appropriate home environment also can nurture children's home-based learning.

In terms of home environment, the amount of literacy development rendered at the family home contributes, to a great extent, on a child's development. Adequate provision of reading materials, like study books and academic playing toys in a family home, can have a greater impact on a child's academic performance – more than what has been taught at school (Garry & Rayleen, 2011). According to Ngwaru (2012), low-income parents lack the ability to engage their children in literacy-development skills due to reasons like low literacy-levels of the parents, a lack of learning resources or facilities, and a suitable learning environment. Ngwaru (2012) further asserts that parents from sub-Saharan African countries struggle with effective parental involvement, unlike their counterparts from the developed countries with series of advantages like good levels of parental education, decent jobs and adequate learning facilities. Such advantages make it flexible for the parents. For example, they can buy and provide learning materials for their children, compared to parents from a low-income background. From a capability view, poverty is seen as any deprivation of capability such as lack of resources and basic amenities such that is significant to a parents' functioning. Studies have also indicated that family issues may stand in the way of meaningful parental involvement.

According to Garry & Rayleen (2011:41), single parents or parents with a large family size may have problems becoming involved in the education of their children due to other family responsibilities. Work status can also be a confining factor because an individual unemployed parent may not be able to afford transportation or pay a babysitter so that they can have time to attend school meetings (Garry & Rayleen, 2011:41; Maluleke, 2014:32). Garry & Rayleen (2011) further argue that the parents' general state of health or psychological state of mind could stand as a barrier to meaningful parental involvement. For example, (this include) parents without a social grant-support mechanism, with a poor state of mental and physical health, and parents with too many external family members. Parents under such conditions could see these issues as hindrances to meaningful parental involvement.

Coleman's survey during the 1960's claim that one of the best determinants of a learner's achievement is the socio-economic status of the learner's parents; this led to an outburst of

research on learner achievement. According to Coleman, in Maluleke (2014), many researchers confirm that ‘parental qualities typically associated with socioeconomic status are positively related to parental involvement’ (p.20). For example, Lareau, in Maluleke (2014:20), reveals that higher income-earning middle-class parents were actively involved in school programmes; also they were dominant in school governance and decision making bodies; however, working-class parents were reduced to zero roles in terms of involvement in their children’s education. Moreover, Maluleke (2014) found that teachers are more likely to give extra attention to high-achievement learners than the opposite (low-achievement learners). Low-achievement learners feel disliked by teachers. Therefore, parents perceive that ‘it is because we are poor’ and this in turn lead to feelings of displeasure (p.20). Maluleke further asserts that low-income parents feel that schools look down on their involvement and assume that they are problems to the school. They also believe that teachers are biased in respect of poor parents and disregard them with the view that they are people who care less for their children’s education. Watson et al. (2012) argue that barriers such as ‘parents’ low levels of education, lack of resources, poverty and ‘teacher’s negative attitudes’ contribute to the problem of low involvement’ (p.46). Hence, the factors that will determine parental involvement includes family size, resources, the parents’ welfare and health-supporting mechanism, social-grant support, teachers’ attitudes, and so further more. Sen (1999), argues that development involves anything that enhances peoples’ well-being.



According to De Carvalho (2001), the reason for parental involvement is to increase learner performance. This also calls for a review on the issue of equity because the level of parental involvement seems to be at a higher level in middle-class communities compared to that of low-income communities where there are issues of low parental involvement and low academic achievement as opposed to high-achievement learners from middle-class parents (De Carvalho 2001). Based on the argument above, children from higher-income parents tend to benefit more regarding their education when compared to children from a low-income family background. In addition, children from low-income homes are likely to have fewer opportunities at home to nurture their capacity or even to develop the willingness to learn and promote individual learning. Circumstances surrounding families can either affect a learner’s performance negatively or positively. For example, the Centre on Education Policy (2012) states that ‘middle class families are more likely to raise their children to participate in structured activities that develop talents, and, unlike working class and poor children, these children become better at interacting with and negotiating with societal institutions’ (p.5). Furthermore,

the level of parental education, skills or socio-economic status, to a great extent, influences the child's development. Research has reported the intersection between parents' education and a child's development (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009).

Of course these findings do not actually mean that low-income school-community children are bound to fail. The findings indicated the gap in society. Also there are still parents amongst low-income families who really do provide a nurturing home-learning environment for their children. Research findings by the Centre on Education Policy (2012) noted that creating a nurturing home environment for children is crucial to a child's cognitive development, regardless of the parents' socio-economic status. The findings conclude that 'home environment continued to significantly and positively predict subsequent academic intrinsic motivation even when SES was controlled' (p.5).

The discussion above indicates the relationship between effective parental involvement and children's academic outcomes. Therefore, planning largely on parental involvement programmes will determine the extent of parental involvement in schools. Schools must develop systematic involvement-strategies or programmes which can integrate and suit all kinds of families. Confining factors exist amongst parents in low-income school communities which take form in different dimensions such as language barriers, parents' low levels of education, the lack of an enabling environment, time as a factor, teachers'/parents' attitudes, institutional barriers, and logistic or socio-economic barriers. These factors are considered relevant to the pursuit of this study because the researcher sought to explore factors that prohibit meaningful parental involvement in the context of low-income school communities.

2.8 THE CAPABILITY APPROACH AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will explore the capability approach as a theoretical framework for analysing parental involvement. The researcher will explicate the nature of the capability approach and its different elements. Aspects such as the nature of the capability approach, its' relevance to parental involvement and the critique of the capability approach will be explored. The researcher will also integrate the capability approach with already existing approaches to enhance parental involvement in pursuit of a critical analysis of parental involvement.

2.8.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Barnard (2006), circumstances surrounding parents can decrease their ability to be fully involved in the education of their children. Issues such as poor health conditions, low self-esteem and low levels of parental education play a huge role in reducing the ability of

parents to interact with their children or become fully involved in school activities. One of the objectives of this research is to analyse the existing approaches to enhancing parental involvement in the context of low-income school communities (a case), using the capability approach framework. The capability approach by Sen (1999), conceptualized certain barrier factors which impact negatively on the functioning of parents and, therefore, affect the learners' education. The capability approach is useful in many ways. For example, it is useful in explaining barrier factors to parental involvement. It can also be used to generate solutions in order to develop parental involvement.

Garry & Rayleen (2011) asserts that there are several approaches available to improve the level of parental involvement, such as using template initiatives for different parental involvement activities, conferences, programmes, workshops, meetings and other policy initiatives. The capability approach is suggested for the expansion of a family-support programme to all parents in order to enhance their freedom to effectively participate in their children's education (Sen, 1999). The capability approach identifies various 'unfreedoms' that limit human functioning. The framework initiated the developmental approach in order to enhance people's functioning. Qizilbash (1997:251) and Sen (1999) explain the capability approach as a theoretical framework used in assessing the quality of life, equal opportunity and developmental policies. The theory of the capability approach is focused on what individuals or groups are able to do, and be who they desire to be, in terms of their capability, as opposed to what they actually have.

According to Nussbaum & Sen (1993:30), to evaluate freedom and actual abilities, the capability approach suggests that one has to take into account the various sets of valuable functionings as part of living, including a set of individual capabilities as one unit of variables which generates the sought-after information. Sen (1999:75) defines capabilities as those combinations of things which an individual values doing and which include the ability to be able to do those things. This means that capabilities are the necessary resources that a person requires in order to adequately function.

2.8.2 THE NATURE OF THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

The core features of the capability approach include functionings and capabilities. The capability approach theory by Sen (1999) rejects monetary income as a core measure of well-being and development; rather it provides an alternative approach to evaluate human well-being and development because it is focused mainly on the objective condition of a person, and

what a person can do and be, including a combination of opportunities and successes. Sen (1992) note the importance of capabilities for people to function as a yardstick for people's well-being or development against the use of monetary income to evaluate the quality of life or human development. According to this approach, well-being and development should be seen as the ability of people to function in terms of their effective opportunities to actualize their goals and live a worthy life. Sen explains functionings as successful doings and beings; for example, participating in the social life of the community, the ability to be heard, the ability to read and write, living in a conducive environment and adequate shelter, and having self-esteem and so forth. According to Sen (1993), capabilities refer to a person's real freedom to achieve such functionings; for example, the ability to participate in the life of the community. Hence, the term functionings refers to a person's achievements, while capabilities are those potential opportunities which can lead to one's achievements. Maarmaan (2009) has noted that Sen distinguished between means to achieve what a person values, freedom to achieve such values and the actual achievement. Therefore a person's well-being is determined by freedom of preference or a combination of functionings that are of value.

According to Robeyns (2005), resources or public goods are only important and counted when they specifically impacted on the full functioning of a person, and not just because of material property. For example, a car for transportation can only be useful if the road is appropriate for this mode of transport; otherwise one may not be able to maximize the use of such transportation. The availability of a suitable road for transportation enables one's functioning as against the provision of a car without an accessible road. One can make use of the transportation to achieve his or her needs, either by collecting fares or by travelling to his or her destination without having to walk for a distance. This can only be achieved when there is a car and an accessible road for the car to drive on. The factors that enhance the relationship between resources (public goods) and functionings are referred to as conversion factors.

Sen identified three types of conversion factors. These include personal characteristics, for example literacy levels and the mental and physical shape of an individual; social structures such as social institutions, social norms, public policies, human right and power structures; and environmental factors such as infrastructure, climate and public goods. Taking into account these conversion factors enables one to judge the impact of these conversion factors on people's capability and functioning (Robeyns, 2005).

The ability to make a choice from a combination of available opportunities reflects a core feature of the capability approach. According to Nussbaum (2006:301) ‘Sen defined capabilities as socially available opportunities for valuable functioning and proposed them as a standard for measuring levels of development worldwide’ (p.301).

From a capability perspective, poverty refers to the restriction of basic capabilities, and these differs, as Sen (1995:15) put it, from the primary physical ones such as being well nourished, being properly clothed and sheltered, being healthy and so forth, to an expansive social achievement such as contributing to the life of the community, the ability to show up in the community without shame, the ability to be heard, the ability to read and write, self-dignity and so forth. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) found that low levels of parental education and constrained well-being contribute to unfreedoms in South Africa. Hence, this approach calls for the review of parents’ well-being and development in order to empower parents to be able to function at their optimal level. According to Daniel-Oghenetega (2010), ‘The framework explained the importance of freedom a person has to choose such as her functionings, but a set of attributes to function and attain the minimal level of well-being is required’ (p.54).

According to Sen (1992), in terms of evaluations and policies, the main focus should be on what people are able to do and be, on the quality of people’s lives, and on limiting barriers in people’s lives in order to enhance their freedom to lead the kind of life that they value. This means that Sen mainly introduced capabilities as an alternative framework to evaluate development based on people’s ability to fulfil their goals through various choices.

In the words of Robeyns (2003), ‘The capability approach evaluates policies according to their impact on people’s capabilities’... ‘It asks whether people are being healthy, and whether the means and resources necessary for this capability are present, such as clean water, access to doctors, protection from infections and diseases, and basic knowledge on health issues. It asks whether people are well nourished and whether the conditions for this capability, such as having sufficient food supplies and food entitlements, are being met. It asks whether people have access to high-quality educational system, to real political participation, to community activities that support them to cope with struggles in daily life and that foster real friendships’ (p.96). Robeyns further states that ‘For some of these capabilities, the main input will be financial resources and economic production, but for others it can also be political practices and institutions, such as the effective guaranteeing and protection of freedom of thought, political participation, social or cultural practices, social structures, social institutions, public

goods, social norms, traditions and habits' (p.96). This means that the framework covers all aspects of well-being and development such as economic, political, social, ethical and cultural development. It becomes crucial at this stage to reduce the unfreedom factors that play a role in restricting people's capabilities.

This framework provides a lens for understanding people's well-being and development, and the relationship between development and functioning. Therefore, developing human beings would involve policies or social services used in identifying the overall capabilities that increases a fully human life, providing a set of professional capabilities in respect of people's values, including practices towards full capabilities, identifying initiatives and programmes to support people's capabilities. As mentioned above, development would require a combination of meaningful capabilities. Therefore, one of the main objectives in this research is targeted on human development and capabilities. Hence, improved capability could be achieved through the provision of public-good services such as training, provision of resources, projects or educational programmes hoping that through such public-good (social) services, people's capabilities will be developed. This is actually because parents place a huge amount of value on social services to improve parental capabilities.

The availability of educational programmes and social services will promote individual development. Such programmes would be required in low-income school communities in South Africa. Therefore, the framework is concerned with capabilities attached to public-good services or development programmes, such as educational and workshop programmes on parental involvement. Nussbaum (2000) asserts that all these overall aspects of capabilities would be required for a successful human improvement. Therefore, capabilities and functionings are particularly designed for improving parental involvement.

2.9 APPLYING CAPABILITIES TO THE EXISTING STRATEGIES OR APPROACHES TO ENHANCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Certainly, many barrier factors stand in the way of effective parental involvement as seen above (previous chapters). Schools, teachers and policy makers need to recognize these barriers in order to make necessary intervention strategies.

2.9.1 SKILLS ACQUISITION

According to Ngwaru (2012), any intervention measures to intercede barriers facing parents in low-income communities need to acknowledge the literacy skills of such parents. Literacy skills here refer to abilities, ideas, practices and sets of knowledge that are vital to people's

functioning and well-being. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:128) highlight the importance of literacy skills by saying that literacy skills can make a person an effective public speaker or active partaker in their children's education. In affirmation, Hill & Chao (2009:199) suggest that to enhance the academic performance of low-income community learners', it is essential to introduce basic initiative requirements that focus on parental involvement in schools.

As has been explained above, the capability approach suggests for development in order to enhance people's functioning. According to Sen (1992), the main focus should be on enhancing people's lives, limiting constraints in order to develop their freedom to participate in their children's education. Therefore, such training initiative should be introduced to both parents and also teachers. Watson et al. (2012) assert that parents benefit from school initiatives that are channelled to increase self-efficacy, knowledge and skills. According to Sen (1999), capability is a person's choice of freedom to live the kind of life which he or she values. For example, increasing parents' self-efficacy, knowledge and skills will develop their ability to be involved in the education of their children, which is of value to the parents. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) suggests another strategy which is to provide teacher in-service training. For example, providing the teachers with a training programme on how to involve or collaborate with the parents. In affirmation, Hill & Chao (2009: 200) advocates that schools should educate teachers on how to assist parents. The school administrators can also use various initiative strategies to promote parental involvement.

Walker et al. (2010), asserts that parents perceive their role and their ability, the results and invitation from the school, the teachers' attitude and provision of resources such as time, energy, knowledge and skills as mediators of parental involvement. Schools can apply these methods to promote parental involvement. However, most of these variables are shaped by the society, while some capacities are shaped by individual characteristics. Additionally, Andrew (2011) affirms that every parent has the capacity to be taught and they can learn new skills. Also, they want their children to progress in life. He further stated that parents actually care about the development of their children; ethnicity and cultural aspects are natural and justifiable as most family norms are based on cultural differences. Different parents from different cultural backgrounds hold different abilities in respect of parental involvement in the education of their children. According to the capability approach, people's well-being or development should involve the ability of people to function in order to enhance their freedom to live the kind of life that they value. Such freedom includes the ability or opportunities given to parents to become involved in their children's education.

Integrating or holding unto diverse cultures will show parents and learners that the school actually supports their various cultures. The Australian Government (2008:6), in agreement with the above, stated that school communities can embrace the strategy of working together with each family in the area of capacity building. However, Andrew (2011) describes capacity building as a different mixture of skills, opportunities, incentives and values. Some of these capacities could actually be influenced by individual features, while some could be influenced by social machinery (Andrew, 2011). The capability approach conceptualizes certain barrier factors which restrain people's capability and it proposes a developmental approach so as to support human development. Therefore, if there are fewer opportunities for parents to become involved, it may become a stress for parents. Thus, parents' capabilities have been reduced.

Most problems associated with parental involvement could be addressed through educational initiative strategies. For example, designing some teaching and learning initiatives attached with skill acquisition and language lessons. Andrew (2011), notes that at least mutual respect, as well as a healthy relationship and the principles of effective collaboration could be learned through such intervention strategies. Such strategy initiatives will enable parents to gain information about school involvement by having conversations with one another, including the educators. Robeyns (2003) adds that 'for some capabilities, the main input should be the effective guaranteeing and protection of freedom of thought, fostering real friendship and providing public goods such as training towards developing capabilities'. Thus, when parents are being shown respect, it helps to build their confidence in terms of connecting at school.

In line with the above discussion, Nye et al. (2006) suggest that parents should be guided, supported and provided with the knowledge or skills to participate in their children's learning at home. Andrew (2011) also asserts that a number of strategies could actually be used to help parents. Strategies like teaching parents' literacy and numeracy skills, playing games with the children, doing educational puzzles and motivating or rewarding their children for excellence performance. In affirmation, Watson et al. (2012) asserts that child motivation 'was also a critical point as children were more likely to thrive when parents were involved and build supportive relationships as adults and care takers' (p.44). Parental involvement shows the opposite of poor academic performance, therefore creating a supportive environment would emotionally nurture the child's cognitive development. Research evidence indicates the intersection between meaningful parental involvement and the child's improved academic performance (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). When parents show interest in the education of their children, there is the likelihood of improved learner outcomes.

2.9.2 MOTIVATION STRATEGIES

To improve the level of parental involvement in low-income school communities, it is vital to develop outreach initiative strategies that will include the interest of poor and low educated parents. According to Watson et al. (2012), studies on parental involvement have shifted from the ‘what’ of parental involvement to the ‘why’ of parental involvement (p.47). To understand the reason why parents are not involved in the education of their children may provide a framework that will help schools establish effective strategies. Watson et al. (2012) strongly advocate the belief that parental involvement, to a large extent, has a positive impact on a child’s academic performance. However, they further assert that there was no identification or awareness of the motivational element that push the parents to become involved.

According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), parental involvement is highly encouraged by the current South African government due to its role in learner outcomes, (Watson et al., 2012) ‘but it remained elusive and challenging in some schools’ (p.48). Moreover, Sheldon, in Watson et al. (2012), explored the effects of parents’ social-welfare system as one of the key determinant factors of parental involvement. The study reveals that parents gain a lot from a social-welfare support system. Part of what the parents in the study benefited from include self-confidence and social welfare, including skills and knowledge which enables them to participate in the education of their children. According to Brighouse (2000) and Sen (1999), all parents should be provided with realistic opportunities in order to become actively involved in the education of their children; this is because of the fact that effective opportunities enhance the capability of parents to identify and live a worthy life. According to the capability approach, parents need to be equipped in order to live the kind of life they value. When people are provided with various choices of opportunity, their capability tends to be developed. Thus, the opportunities provided to parents allow them to achieve their dream of becoming who they want to be. Watson et al. (2012) explain a theoretical model approach that gives understanding on why parents may or may not choose to get involved. The theoretical approach is related to the Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1986); it explores ‘parents’ perceptions of their ability, the outcome, the invitation to be involved, and the availability of other resources such as time, energy, knowledge, and skills’ (p.48). The warm welcoming climate of a school determines whether the parents would want to become involved in school activities. Preference is suggested to be a way or one aspect of parental involvement.

The study by Martines, Thomas and Kremer, in Watson et al. (2012), argues that research based on choice (preference) of schools could explain the reason why parents choose to get involved

in schools. They conclude that choice is a form of parental involvement which is also significant to learner performance. The study focused on what to choose and why. The study suggested that the parents' main reasons for school preference include the quality of education offered in the school, the school's climate condition, discipline and the school interest towards the parents. The Theory of School Preference enables parents to choose from a number of options which would positively influence the quality of their children's education. However, no matter how capable or influential such a theory is in terms of parent's involvement, it does not necessarily control the level of parental involvement (Watson et al., 2012).

Moreover, Qonde (2000) highlights the positive influence and the importance of parents in school-policy development and administration in the United Kingdom. The study explored changes in roles initiated by the Develop School Management (DSM) policy. The focus was on parents' roles and responsibilities on school governing bodies. The study noted that the parents' significantly improved the school and influenced the school administration through parental preference. Qonde (2000) further states that parental preference was part of the UK government's strategies to ensure that a school contains parental interest. Through such policy strategy, the balance of power between parents and schools was achieved. The study reported that parental preference did not only influence effectiveness in the schools but also contributed to high learner outcomes. The ability to make a choice from a combination of available opportunities reflects a core feature of the capability approach. According to this approach, capabilities are those available opportunities which can lead to effective parental functioning in the education of their children, such as the ability to be heard or participate in the life of the society.

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al., in Watson et al. (2012), parents' motivation could be enforced through 'parents' sense of roles relative to personal motivation, invitation, and life context' (p.48). The three dimensions of motivation can be expanded. Personal motivation refers to what they explained as 'parental role constructs and parental efficacy'. In their words Hoover-Dempsey et al., in Watson et al. (2012), state that parental role constructs are the 'parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in their children's education'; 'a parents' sense of responsibility' (p.48). Parents' self-efficacy refers to 'the extent to which parents believes that through their involvement they could exert positive influence on their children's educational outcomes', and 'a parents' sense of empowerment' (p.48). Invitation then involves school/child invitations which Hoover-Dempsey et al., in Watson et al. (2012), describe as a general school/child invitation. Meanwhile, Watson et al. (2012) summarise it by saying that

invitation refers to the parents' perceptions that the learner and the school want them to get involved. In terms of life context, it looks at the parents' view in respect of factors such as time, knowledge, strength and skills. Hill & Chao (2009:200) postulate that schools should provide the necessary support mechanisms such as incentives and literacy skills for parental involvement activities. Sen (1999), argues that human development should focus on promoting people's freedom and capability in every aspect. Therefore, incentives and literacy skills will open a door of opportunities for parental development.

In order to achieve meaningful parental involvement, there is a need for low-income school communities to have a clear understanding of why parents choose between whether to get involved or whether not to get involved. Through such means, schools should take account of all major factors that influence parental involvement. Schools should be able to identify family backgrounds so that they can support parental involvement through the use of services that are applicable to every parent (Maluleke, 2014:36). According to the capability approach, various problems could diminish parents' capabilities – and problems like lack of social services, opportunities or lack of skills should be noted. According to Sen (1999), these problems could be enhanced through the provision of public goods such as skill acquisition and social-support programmes. In summary, when parents are provided with access to developmental programmes, their ability to effectively participate in the education of the learners would be enhanced.

2.9.3 STRATEGIES THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Lack of effective communication channels may become a barrier to meaningful parental involvement. Schools should create effective communication channels in order to communicate their mission and vision statements, or the school goals, across to the parents and the school community. This can be a problem, especially in a multi-cultural community with different languages and cultures. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) notes that some of the ways of dealing with such problems could be through emphasizing the need for school and community collaboration. They further highlight the importance of using a language interpreter or distributing bulletins in local dialect. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) states that 'the use of local radio is an effective way of reaching community members where a large percentage is illiterates' (p.118). Therefore, clearly articulating the school's goals in collaboration with the parents is crucial to the children's education. In affirmation of the above point, Comer (2000) has mentioned that to acquire knowledge depends on parents' ability to write, read and listen, and also their ability to express ideas fluently. Hence, giving out language lessons, developing

vocabulary together with enhancing the level of reading, is crucial to effective parental involvement. Comer (2000) suggests that schools should help parents to engage in the following: help parents to use the appropriate words or phrases in terms of conversation amongst people, talk or discuss with children during homework, promote communication levels and assist children with literacy skills.

Informing parents of expectations required of them through such communication will help increase the level of parental involvement and learner outcomes. According to the capability approach, human development involves the availability of effective opportunities in order to enhance people's freedom. The provision of appropriate help will allow parents to become fully involved in the education of their children and give them the freedom to do so. Therefore, development according to the capability approach aims at improving the quality of human lives. This means that the approach considers what human beings can do in terms of available opportunities.

The Australian Government (2008:6), advocates that schools should make use of communication outreach to invite and involve parents. Communication happens between homes and schools by allowing both parties to learn more about goals and expectations. Hence, this will provide clarification and understanding between parents and schools. Also, it will bridge the gap between cultural differences. According to Henderson et al. (2001), meetings must be clearly stated in different languages. This will enable the parents to feel they are part of the process. They highlight the need to acknowledge cultural differences during meetings and other school events. Respect, they say, is reciprocal.

Epstein et al. (2002), states that schools can respect parents' culture by communicating in their various languages to develop mutual relationships and trust. Trust between both parties will lead to shared goals and expectations. Sen (1999), explains functionings as the beings and doings of a person such as self-respect or ability to appear in society without a shame. In order for parents to be able to function fully in the education of their children, they will require respect from the school. Respect in this aspect represents the freedom to live the kind of life that one values. It is required that people need to be respected in order to live a valued life. When parents are shown respect they build self-confidence.

In their words, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) write: 'One of the first steps in creating home/school partnership is to recognize that the strength of the school lies in the differences families bring to the school' (p.166). Hence, schools need to provide a warm and genuine

welcome to all parents by acknowledging cultures, languages, beliefs, values and traditional norms. This means that parents' and learners' culture must be respected and recognized, among other things, by 'strengthening communication strategies which takes into account the linguistics differences of the community' (Michael et al., 2012: 72). In other words, schools must ensure that information to all parents is accessible.

Concerning the above discussion, schools need to acknowledge the fact that parents care for the success of their children. When accounting for the lack of parental involvement in some schools, certain things need to be accounted for. Several factors play a role as to why parents decide not to get involved. Schools must consider these factors before jumping to the conclusion that parents care less about their children's education. Moreover, Hills & Chao (2009:65) discovered common strategies across parents of different ethnicities. The strategies relating to communication and home discussions were consistent all through the research. Also, schools must develop effective channels of communication or partnerships with parents. This will enable teachers to effectively share information regarding school events with parents. Through the creation of effective communication channels and the establishment of school/family partnerships, meaningful parental involvement could be achieved; at the same time, parents will have the opportunity to suggest ideas and give feedback to the school (Maluleke, 2014:37).

It is essential that schools should acknowledge that expectations, regardless of profession of both parties, should be in line with that of parents. Hence, schools need to choose the kind of language to use during the first PTA meeting. Therefore, it is the opinion of this study that schools and parents should learn how to use appropriate words during meetings. There should be a communication pattern that will suit all parents. Schools are undiversified. Therefore, when a school is strategically planning to improve the level of parental involvement at school, it should take into account the specific problems of the school, such as why parents are not participating in the education of the children. The discussions above would be imperative to this research. The researcher sought to establish strategies or methods that could be used to enhance parental involvement.

2.9.4 SHARED DECISION-MAKING

According to the Epstein's model (1995), one of the dimensions of parental involvement involves the inclusion of parents as members of the school decision-making process. This

dimension of involvement means that parents can also be involved in a school's decision-making process that would, in one way or another, impacts on the education of their children.

The South African Schools Act (SASA), Act 108 of 1996, provides parents in public schools with the power to actively participate in school governance. This mandate expects parents to play a crucial role such as collaborating with the school and the community to improve school activities. This Act supports democracy. Also, it encourages tolerance, collaboration and shared decision-making among all stakeholders. In that manner, it moves away from the traditional authoritarian system (Maluleke, 2014). An effort has been made by the current South African government to address inequalities in the education system. Yet there are still school communities facing the problem of a lack of parental involvement, especially low-income schools. Irrespective of a lack of resources in low-income school communities, there is evidence of a lack of participation by the key stakeholders, such as parents and communities. Many low-income school communities have a specific history in South Africa (Vuyisile, 2012). Most parents from these communities lack the basic necessities of life as a result of poverty, including poor education. Vuyisile (2012) also states that there are claims that low-income schools are not regarded because they come from a background that has no political power. Therefore, the parents from low-income school communities would need developmental policies to empower them in order to succeed.

Generally, Vuyisile (2012) noted that South African principals from low-income school communities face more challenges than other school principals, especially in this period of school reform. This means that there are many responsibilities and challenges facing principals from low-income school communities. To address some of the challenges, school administrators need to systematically plan for parental involvement so as to engage the parents in developing the schools. Meanwhile, studies have shown that most parents want to become part of the school decision-making process; however, schools turn them down. This may be due to authoritarian school leadership (Cotton & Wilelund, 1989). According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), teachers feel threatened when parents indicate an interest in taking part in the school decision-making process. They are afraid of criticism by the parents. Schools can use such an opportunity/strategy to develop the quality of their leadership through parents' capacity building.

Olson (2009) writes: 'Shared governance has come to connote two complementary and sometimes overlapping concepts: giving various groups of people a share in key decision-

making process, often through elected representation; and allowing certain groups to exercise primary responsibility for specific area of decision-making' (p.2). Shared governance overlaps in two dimensions; firstly, it allows a parental voice in school decision-making and, secondly, it presents parents with the role of ensuring that every decision reached is implemented towards achieving the school goals. Additionally, any decisions-making process made in this rational process goes to favour every stakeholder as their voices and contributions are being shared and heard. Development, as stated by Nussbaum (2006:306), should support people's ability to fulfil their goals through various choices. Allowing parents to be involved in school decision-making will increase their capability and functionings. According to Sen, functioning include the ability to be heard. Thus, every parent wants to be heard. Such an avenue will give them a voice.

According to Kimu (2012), when parents are involved in the school's decision-making process, they can to a great extent influence the academic performance of the learners and increase the relationship between the school and the community. They can also contribute towards the development of the school community. Kimu (2012) further asserts that parents can support or determine the school budget, assist in staff recruitment, contribute to improving the school policies and administration as well as the school curriculum. The study also indicated that parents would like to participate in the school decision-making process.

According to Joubert, in Kimu (2012), the reason for rational decision-making is to give every stakeholder the voice or power so as to contribute in the school's activities. This will enable parents, the school, learners and the school community to effectively take part in the school's decision-making process that will in turn, increase the level of parental involvement as well as learner results. This process involves active participation in the school's management and administration. Kimu, in a summary of the School Impact Model by Gordon in Kimu (2012), writes that 'parents take part in the school's parent advisory committee in an effort to make the school more responsive to the needs of families ... particularly low-income families may be involved at policy councils, committees and boards to impact in them skills in decision-making and school structures' (p.62). Therefore, parents serving in School Governance Bodies need to be informed about school governance policies. They must be provided with opportunities to learn the required skills and to share ideas and perceptions, as well as make suggestions to improving the school. The theory of the capability approach explains peoples' well-being as a life worth living. For example, the ability to achieve one's goal and reach the utmost potential in life, which can occur as a result of one's freedom and real opportunity to lead the kind of

life he or she values. This means that training parents on skills and allowing them to share their voices will enhance their capabilities and thus give them freedom to express themselves.

Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) have suggested that some parents could play a role of leader by representing the opinions, ideas and concerns of other parents. There are many ways in which parents can participate in school decision-making. 'They can become active in school decision-making by attending meetings regularly, sharing their opinions on school related issues with educators, and exercising their right to participate as partners in the decision making process concerning programmes and other decisions that affect their children' (Comer, 2000:114). Schools can do much to assist parents in becoming involved at this level.

In a report of what works in Canada regarding home/school collaboration, Desforges & Abouchar (2003:54) reveal the impact of parental involvement on learner achievements and school improvements. The research notes the impact of parental involvement on school governance as well as on learner outcomes. The report highlights the relationship between developing parental involvement policies and the increasing level of parental involvement. This developmental policy on parental involvement includes information and technology, and the sharing of ideas between homes and schools which, in turn, expands the parents' capacity. Planning to increase the level of parental involvement is crucial, especially in low-income school communities. Such strategic methods could be used to enhance the capacity of parents. Moreover, this topic will be useful regarding this current research, which sought to explore intervention methods to institutionalise effective parental involvement.

2.9.5 HOME AND SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Home or family and school collaboration is one area that is used in enhancing schools, families and learner outcomes. Family/school collaboration has been reviewed in the United States by Desforges & Abouchar (2003). Their research suggested that successful involvement strategies necessitate systematic planning and organisational change. 'We must recognize the organisational climate that exists within our schools and (often covert) messages about involvement that we send...this is particularly important for parents who have had negative school experiences themselves' (p.55). Comer (2000) also states that collaboration initiatives should involve working towards developing a system for nurturing the process for real and lasting change. Sen (1992) believes that certain individuals or groups of people require certain sets of goods or resources in order to be able to function effectively. Nurturing friendships in

this case should be seen as development that will help improve parents' capability to become involved in school activities.

With regard to some of the practices and projects that have worked in the US, Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) drew a list of basic or core beliefs that should be used in the process of planning or developing effective home/school collaboration. They are as follows:

1. Collaboration should be pro-active rather than re-active; the engagement of all parents should be worked for
2. Collaboration involves sensitivity to the wide ranging circumstances of all students and families
3. Collaboration recognizes and values the contributions parents have to make to the educational process
4. Collaboration must engender parental empowerment; all parents must be given a voice and that voice must be heard (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:55).

During planning, schools should consider past successful strategies which suggests that for such planning to become a success, it has to at least run for not less than three years. According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), 'The plan should conform to the general principles of management paying heed to role clarification, resources allocation, target setting, training, monitoring, evaluation and reviewed' (p.55). This is in line with building collaboration with parents from low-income communities. All stakeholders' involvement, support, and commitment are crucial when creating parental involvement initiatives. Comer (2000) concurs that 'Parent groups or committee need to reach out to key players in the school community as a whole' (P.118). Teacher-Parent Conferences has been suggested as one of the strategies that could be used to improve parental involvement.

2.9.6 TEACHER-PARENT CONFERENCES

Children tend to perform well when they see their parents at school events. Attending school conferences is another way of parental involvement in their children's education. Parent-teacher conferences organized by schools provide parents the opportunity for a face-to-face communication with teachers. In the words of Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009): 'In this face-to-face encounter, specific information about the child can be exchanged, insight is gained, and attitudes are changed or developed' (p.57). According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:57) and Comer (2000:38), schools should plan such conferences for a minimum of twice yearly and ensure participation of every parent, with a follow-up meeting if needed. In order to ensure that

all parents participate in such a crucial event, there should be provision for transport, arrangement of a translator where needed, and even child care for infants so that parents would have no reason to be absent from the conference. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) states that 'effective conferences do not just happen; they are carefully planned' (p.57). It is essential to encourage participation by all parties involved. According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), children can also be invited when dealing with issues concerning them, such as choosing subjects or career preferences.

However, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:7) suggests the following steps for a successful parent-teacher conference: *Step 1: Subject areas/topic*- Topics or areas to be covered in the conference must be written down. Distribute notices or short notice of ideas/questions for parents to think about; *Step 2: Major objectives*- Clearly state the aim of such conference, whether it will be to give general information with regard to a child's progress or to discuss a certain area of a child's development. What are the school/teacher targets to be accomplished? What area is expected of the parents to talk about? What is most needed to be communicated across to each other? *Step 3: Conference plan*- What steps could be taken in order to ensure that all objectives are met? For example, what are the questions to be asked, what point could be made, and what are the ideas to be offered? Time should be given to parents for questions and feedback; *Step 4: Materials*- What kind of materials are to be shared with the parents? When the need arises to show parents some example of work, parents should also be prepared in advance. Is every details organized to complement the conference plan? If parents are expected to practise skills at home with their children such as reading, writing and counting skills, you should also distribute a printed worksheet to the parents; *Step 5: Action plan*- Follow up the conference with an action plan to ensure that both parents and schools are accountable for supporting the child. What precise steps, if any, could be recommended? What ways can parents partner with school to support their children's education? Expect feedback, ideas and solutions from the parents; *Step 6: Closure and follow up arrangements*- Conclude all the topics that have been discussed during the conference with a friendly thank-you to all participants. Set up a communication channel to follow up or arrange another meeting to evaluate progress made.

Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:60) summarized by encouraging schools to adopt the use of home visit. Since visiting family homes is a 'powerful communication tool'. Comer (2000:38) affirms that teachers should arrange for home visit when appropriate.

Parent/teacher conferences usually take place twice in a year at schools. According to the above discussion, a parent-teacher conference is a way of getting parents involved at the same time allowing the opportunity for a face-to-face conversation with the teachers. It also, allows parents and teachers to discuss the progress and curriculum of the learners. Some of the objectives of this current research include establishing teachers' perceptions of parental involvement as well as strategies that can be used to enhance parental involvement. Certainly, the parent-teacher conference has been identified as one of the successful strategies to parental involvement, with a great impact on learner outcomes. Hence, this review is considered to be essential to the current study.

2.10 THE RELEVANCE OF THE CAPABILITY APPROACH FOR EXISTING PROGRAMMES TO ENHANCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In the quest to improve learners' academic performances, it is important to lay emphasis on a fundamental programme or developmental policies that will focus on parents' school-related involvement. However, the outcomes of all parental involvement programmes in low-income school communities will be determined by how well such programme(s) or developmental policy (ies) suits the needs of all parents and are being planned. This becomes vital because of the fact that families are the most significant when it comes to a child's learning or development.

2.10.1 IN SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME

Michael et al. (2012:13) suggests that parental involvement should be seen broadly. For example, it is necessary to involve all parents such as poor parents or parents who are illiterate. Hence, schools should do research or planning on potential programmes/policies that can be used to promote effective parental involvement. Such programmes/policies should include: parents' and teachers' training; developing school policies on parental involvement, both at a local and national level; developing community partnerships or home/school programmes; volunteering; family learning or parenting education; parents and child support policy programmes or intervention programmes and so forth.

Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) asserts that some parents may not consider it necessary to become involved in the education of their children because of their own past negative schooling experiences. According to their findings, parents may not see education as future opportunity and thus may not believe in interaction with the teachers. In another explanation, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) asserts that some parents' role construction does not include parent-

school involvement. Hence, further research should explore the factors that cause the problem of less parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) further state that research should check variables that influence parental involvement. For example, parents' role construction, parent/teacher attitudes, the parents' sense of self-efficacy, and also the available opportunities as well as invitation for the parents to become involved. Schools can have a clear understanding of what intersects between homes and parental involvement through research or theories such as understanding and evaluating parents' behaviour and attitudes.

Some major factors played a role in limiting the level of parental involvement at schools, factors such as parent's/teacher's attitudes, parents' sense of efficacy, poverty, strength including time as well as, other life challenges facing the parents. According to Sen (1992), capability enhances people's freedom in order to attain functioning. So to achieve functioning, parents will need a sort of empowerment to escape these unfreedoms. Having a clear understanding of these modifying barriers will enable schools to develop effective intervention methods. Furthermore, Epstein (1991) included the attitudes of the teachers as one major determinant of the level of parental involvement at schools. Therefore, if teachers' attitude is significant to high levels of parental involvement, school administrators must introduce policy programmes or workshops to train teachers in parental involvement. It is then crucial to equip educators with skills and knowledge regarding parental involvement.

According to the Republic of South Africa (RSA) (2000), the norms and standard for educators provide educators with a total of 80 hours per year for a professional development training programme. It is possible that schools may either raise the bar of parental involvement or reduce it through the behaviour of teachers towards the parents. This happens to be true particularly in low-income school communities where some teachers see parents as problems instead of people who care for the education of their children (John, 2009). The study by John revealed that both parties pointed accusing fingers at each other regarding the issue of attitudes and responsibilities. Hence, schools must develop initiatives or policies on parental involvement to expose teachers to how to handle the parents. In the words of Maluleke (2014), 'Although educators are professionally qualified, parental involvement training is required to cope with the current environment' (p.36). According to Epstein and Sanders (2006), some educators still have little or no training regarding parental involvement. In addition, Hill & Chao (2009) asserts that new teachers reported that they are confronted with the issue of working together with parents. Therefore, preparing the teachers on how to collaborate with the parents would be essential. Such will address the issue of parental involvement at schools.

Policies or initiatives on parental involvement should not just be about what has to be done but, about harmony, beliefs, sharing of ideas or roles, and the importance of families in the education of their children. Hence, in order for parental involvement to take its place, parents and teachers must have the understanding of what parental involvement is all about in order to achieve effective parental involvement at the schools. Hill & Chao (2009) states that ‘opportunities to build such capacities can occur through pre-service teacher and administrator education and professional development, and parent education and leadership efforts’ (p.186). This can be used to improve or develop parental involvement at schools.

2.10.2 POLICY ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMME

The US (United States) efforts to increase the level of parental involvement through the use of programmes have systematically been featured in school policies. Epstein, in Dessforbes & Abouchaar (2003), writes that programmes on parental involvement have consistently been included in federal, state and local education policies. According to Dessforbes & Abouchaar (2003), government policy-makers, school management, teachers and parents’ organisation in countries like the United States of America, Australia and the United Kingdom, have all introduced policy programmes to raise the level of parental involvement in their various schools. According to Robeyns (2003), any social development or policy programmes is seen as input to peoples’ capabilities. Especially when they provide people with relevant resources that will improve their ability to make choices that add value to their lives. It becomes important that parents should actively be involved not in only their children’s education but also in improving the school at large. Therefore it becomes necessary to provide parents with effective policies that will enhance the capabilities of all parents.

The European Commission, in Dessforbes & Abouchaar (2003), assert that the degree of parental involvement in a particular school determines the quality of such school which can be achieved through:

- Statutory advisory and decision-making bodies
- Evaluation of their schools
- Voluntary associations
- Voluntary involvement in after school activities
- Voluntary involvement in classroom activities
- Communication with the school (Dessforbes & Abouchaar, 2003:52).

The government of the United Kingdom adopted a programme of parental involvement through a number of policy activities which include:

- The enhancement of parent governor roles
- Involvement in inspection process
- Provision of annual reports and prospect uses
- The requirement for home/school agreement
- Provision of increasing amounts of information about the curriculum, school performance and other matters (Dessforges & Abouchaar, 2003:52).

Such a procedure or policy attempt could be productive, especially in low-income school communities where there is low degree of parental involvement.

According to Hill & Chao (2009), schools and families' long-term commitment to meaningful parental involvement in their children's learning is very likely to benefit both parties. Such commitment ensures that parents and schools have access to first-hand information about parental involvement as well as school/community partnerships. They further mention that any effort or policy that acknowledges family/school/community partnerships with the focus on improving learner performance will benefit the children. Such collaboration will develop and encourage actions such that will motivate families to become involved in the learning of their children. For example, the parents' role construction, as well as self-efficacy, is developed socially. Hence, this can happen through a school's systematic planning and community organisation.

Research suggests that a school's cordiality is significant in invitations for parental involvement. The attitudes of teachers and learners exert a significant influence on parents' decisions on whether or not to become involved (Watson et al., 2012; Comer, 2000). In other words, the physical appearance of the school and the teachers' attitude towards parents may discourage parents from getting involved. However, the parents' choice to become involved in the education of their children could be influenced by the school's type of policy programmes to support parental involvement, opportunities and empowerment, as well as the parents' general life circumstances.

According to Hill & Chao (2009), articulating the aims and targets of a particular programme will develop basic follow-up actions or evaluation plans to monitor the progress of the programme. In other words, information should be clear about the target of such programmes.

Information concerning certain ways in which families and schools can collaborate together, may enhance the development of such policy programme. Government programme developers, families and school management should have it in the back of their minds that effective collaboration will benefit a child's learning. This could only be achieved when schools demonstrate a positive attitude or policy toward the important role of parents in the education of their children. However, the focus should be on building a mutual relationship and trust between the school and families and the willingness to share information amongst families, school and the community (Hills & Chao, 2009). Moreover, Comer (2000) asserts that any policy on developing parental involvement should clearly emphasize the relationship between parental involvement and the children's academic outcomes. Therefore, all plans and policy programmes should include diversity in terms of the different families that make up the school population. Comer (2000) further asserts that policy makers should ensure that the groups involved with such policy programmes are committed to ensuring effective home/school partnerships.

According to Kimu (2012), the Education Board in Kenya, which is the mouthpiece of school policy, currently is not aware of the comprehensive benefits of parental involvement in all stake-holders. The Board and the principals must make several decisions. These decisions omit parents as partners in the education of their children, allowing them only a slim role in a school's decision-making processes. According to Swap, in Kimu (2012), most teachers traditionally understand parental involvement in terms of a detailed policy and not actually through training exposure. This calls for schools to develop training in parental involvement for teachers. Schools need to develop policy programmes that will acknowledge parental involvement so as to reduce the problem of less parental involvement. Families and schools need to address this (parental involvement) problem by exchanging relevant information and at the same time providing parents with opportunities that will enable them to work with the school. Kimu (2012:208), asserts that 'they should also have addressed cultural and language barriers' (p.208). John (2012), however, argues that a detailed policy on parental involvement is crucial to determining the level of parental involvement at schools.

In addition, Comer (2000) affirms that schools and teachers' attitudes have a way of influencing parental involvement. Comer lists a number of effective parents/family involvement-policy programmes that could be productive in schools. They include:

- Encouraging professional development for teachers and staff on how to communicate with parents
- Involving parents of all children (for example, children of all ages and grades) in developing the policy
- Providing means of outreach to encourage participation of parents especially those with poor literacy skills.
- Recognizing diverse family structures, circumstances, responsibilities, or differences that can restrict the parents' from participating in the education of their children.
- Informing parents regularly about school events, goals and the progress of their children.
- Creating a link with special service agencies and community groups to address challenges facing families or the community.
- Making a list of the procedures that involves successful home/school/community partnerships and refer it to national standard attached with opportunities to enable the parents to become involved in their children's education.
- Giving the parents' the opportunity to contribute in developing programmes on parental involvement, implementation and evaluation of such programmes.

Any schools that encourage or work towards the development of parental involvement could be said to be systematically working towards school improvement such that will benefit the learners. Schools, policy makers and government should encourage all kinds of parental involvement in education. Research evidence indicated the impact of parental involvement on learner performance. The discussion above is considered significance to this research because the researcher sought to establish programmes or policies that can be used to improve parental involvement in low-income school communities.

2.10.3 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

There is research evidence on the significant effects of community partnerships on school development programmes (Comer, 2000:136; Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009: 110; Hill & Chao, 2009:30). Epstein (1995), in an explanation of Epstein's six models of parental involvement, mentions that collaboration between school and community should include using community resources and services to support schools and families, and children's learning. This partnership can be seen as a connection or integration between schools and the community's

resources. This partnership with one another is to use available resources such as talents and services to support schools, families and learners.

In the website www.lancaster.unl.edu/community/articles/communityschools.shtml (2016), it is written that partnerships: ‘may involve the use of school or neighbourhood facilities and equipment; sharing other resources; collaborative fund-raising and grant applications; volunteer assistance; mentoring and training from professionals and others with special expertise; information sharing and dissemination; networking; recognition and public relations; shared responsibility for planning; implementation and evaluation of programmes and services; expanding opportunities for internships, jobs, recreation and building a sense of community’ (p.1-2). Partnerships or collaborating with the communities could be productive in terms of promoting school activities that will benefit the learners. ‘They could improve schools; strengthen neighbourhoods and lead to noticeable reduction in young people’s problem’

(www.lancaster.unl.edu/community/articles/communityschools.shtml (2016: 1-2)).

Vuyisile (2012) has found a positive relationship between school and community partnerships. Such partnerships, according to Vuyisile (2012), have a way of increasing the relationship between schools and homes as well as bonding them together. Robeyns (2003) includes the fostering of friendships as being vital to people’s functioning. Therefore fostering friendships will enhance people’s capabilities of being able to participate in the life of the community – such as parental involvement in schools. McDonough and Wheeler, in Vuyisile (2012), conducted a research in a Thailand community and found how parents were able to acquire meaningful skills through partnerships with schools. The research also reveals the reason why a community sees a school as one unit. Parents in the findings noted that if their partnership with the school could be strengthened more, it could warrant their becoming more involved. Parents need to see the importance of the school in their community, as is suggested in the findings. According to Vuyisile (2012), the Thailand programme highlights the importance of community/school partnerships in social forestry. The SFEP programme was an effort to enhance school and community partnerships and the learners had to work on a forest-management. Forests had become a challenge to the community due to the forests surrounding their environment.

McDonough and Wheeler, in Vuyisile (2012:310), mention three major targets of the Thailand programmes, as cited in Vuyisile (2012):

- Transforming teaching and learning by changing the traditional role of students;
- Schools contributing to the community's capacity to address local problems;
- Schools becoming more integrated into their host community and the school's ability to exhibit skills and knowledge that is needed in developing the neighborhood (Vuyisile, 2012:310).

The location of the research community is surrounded by forested areas. In the process of deforestation, there was an intentional effort by the community to re-use the forested area for agricultural and commercial purposes. The new curriculum introduced to grades 5 and 6 learners requires the learners to visit the communities and conduct learning enquires regarding the history of the community and forestry-related problems. Their curriculum also covers the area of plants and animals as part of the school/community learning programmes. According to Vuyisile (2012), the members of the community were supportive of learners who try to study indigenous species.

Having effectively gathered information on issues relating to forestry as well as the past history of the community, the learners, through the programme, revealed their findings and made suggestions based on these findings. This programme was used by the school to bring needed change to the community. Through such school/community programmes, parents changed their perceptions of schools. They started seeing schools as one unit of the community and so increased the level of parental involvement in the community.

Moreover, Vuyisile (2012) reports a similar case which involves the Escuela Nueva programme in Columbia. The programme focuses on improving the curriculum and active self-learning. Vuyisile lists some features of the programme which include community involvement, new study curriculum, learning instruction as well as administration (Vuyisile, 2012).

The programme was a success in promoting the relationship between schools and communities. Teachers were mainly trained to facilitate this relationship. Schools and community were supposed to collaborate while they learn from each other. Teachers were expected to go into the community to collect relevant information which they feel could be used to strengthen the relationship between the school and the community. The teachers also captured information regarding parents' day-to-day activities. There was assistance from the learners who also tried to enhance the strong relationship between school and community by interviewing community members, collecting information about the community culture and traditions, recipes, and

traditional dances and songs, including learning about craft production. Such programme activities trigger the involvement of parents in their children's education. In addition, such partnerships were effective and, thus, parents begin to get involved in school activities. When parents have a sense of a role construct, as well as the opportunity such that support parent's self-efficacy, there is a likelihood of becoming involved in school activities.

According to Vuyisile (2012), the parents in those studies were all poor and reside in rural areas. Low-income school communities can use such programmes and experiences, irrespective of their immediate circumstances. Likewise, the African adage that says, 'It takes an entire village to raise a child'. This means that schools and families alone cannot ensure that their children receive a better education as it is every child's right to receive a quality education. Therefore, families, schools and the community have to come together by developing an effective means or projects that will support parental involvement. Community involvement is necessary in terms of children's learning, and as Michael et al. (2012) puts it, 'School should maintain a strong link with families and their communities' (p.74). Michael et al. (2012) suggest that partnerships should include effective communication, co-operation and understanding amongst teachers, parents and the school community as a whole for a meaningful parental involvement programme. This would be relevant to this current research as some of the research objectives are to find how programmes to promote parental involvement in low-income school communities could possibly look like.

Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), argues that for such school/community partnerships to be successful there is a need to involve a plan of action to help make the most of resources (stake holders). This action planning management team should include all concerned members who will evaluate, set targets, and implement strategies in order to achieve the outcomes of such programmes. Home/school programmes would need clear understanding, a mutual relationship between all the stakeholders, and systematic planning in order to achieve the objectives. Such programme initiatives have been contained in an extensive American family/school network which has been in operation for years and at its peak in the National Network of Partnership schools (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

2.10.4 BUILDING CAPACITY FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Epstein's (1995) six models of parental involvement include giving homes or families a support to enhance children's learning at home. This means that schools should support parents to enable them to participate in the children's learning at home. However, parents are

traditionally their child's teacher from birth. Moreover, a significant chunk of a child's learning happens at home before the child's school enrolment. However, parents do not use or have a manual script on child support. Many parents do not know how to support their children's development. Hence, parents will improve if there are school programmes that will support or teach the parents skills on child development.

According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), South Africa is one of the countries that are in need of family support from schools due to its diverse background and inequality in terms of socio-economic disparity between different races. Most disadvantaged black families reside in poverty and cannot afford the basic needs of life like proper housing and food. The historical effects of the apartheid regime and racial segregation in the school system still have had a negative impact on the black community today. A high crime rate, low-income jobs, low levels of parental education and high unemployment rates (24%) contribute to poverty in South Africa, and as a result many families are under life's pressures (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). According to the capability approach perspective, poverty refers to restricting factors that limit capabilities. This approach expresses the importance of freedom in order to enhance people's capabilities such as effective protection, provision of social services and so forth. Moreover, most children from low-income school communities usually live with their grandparents who most times depend on social welfare for sustenance (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009).

It is obvious that all types of South African households will need the support of the schools situated in the community neighbourhood where a link to almost all families is central to making crucial efforts. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), state that it is the responsibility of the School Action Team and its board members to support all families and equip them with skills to become involved in the education of their children. Furthermore, Hill & Chao (2009) asserts that even with the required teacher training, schools, community leaders and the management team need the right information and resources to support parental involvement. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) mention that when planning parent's education programmes, schools or the team head should first of all observe the parents' needs before suggesting education workshops. However, successful parents' education programmes are determined by the particular needs of all parents. Topics on such workshops should be open to parents' preferences. Parents should be provided with the opportunities to choose topics as well as make suggestions. When parents' needs have been examined, the school must provide the required resources to match them. The capability approach is used to evaluate deprivation factors such as what restricts parents' capability to become involved in the education of their children. The framework is also used

to propose or design developmental policies such: what would allow people's freedom to do what they want or to be who they want. Thus, it is imperative for people to make choices of opportunities so as to achieve their goals. Providing opportunities for parents would enhance their capabilities and encourage parental involvement.

Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:36) outlines the kinds of resources that can be used during planning to promote family support programmes in order to enhance home learning as well as develop or strengthen parents' skills. They include: *Skilled parents*- members of a parent group or a community organisation which have the needed skills to inform or train other parents; *Trained specialists*- University staff, doctors, lawyers, dentists, speech therapists, psychologists, nurses, occupational therapist or social workers, to mention a few; *Community agencies*- members of local government, NGOs, health clinics, church groups, religious organisations, fire and police departments; *School teachers*- who are able to speak on academic matters, their hobbies or outside interests (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009:36). Parents need the capacity and skills to be effectively involved in their children's education.

Hill & Chao (2009:187) report on a former district head of some rural schools and once a superintendent award-winner who timeously advocated the role of schools in developing parents' capacity; 'We 're walking out halfway and extending our institutional hand... we are making a big wide bridge to connect [parents] to us, with handrails so they feel safe' (p.187). In addition, Comer (2000:52) asserts that PTA (Parent Teacher Association) members, school administrators and teachers need to work together with parents so as to provide parents with the required skills and knowledge for child development. Schools should use initiatives such as parent-education programmes to support parents and provide them with information and knowledge on child-development skills.

Comer (2000) highlights some effective basic-support parental involvement programmes which include: 1) developing family-support programmes or making referrals to existing community agencies to help parents make sure that students arrive at school rested, fed, clean and ready to learn; 2) helping parents create a document that contains their children's report, such as medical records or other important information; the school can sponsor photography and finger printing programmes for children in the community; 3) sponsoring clothing swaps, food co-ops, coats and boot drives, as well as neighbourhood watch programmes; 4) providing information on free clinics, immunizations, doctors and dentists in the community who offers free public services (Comer, 2000:52). Comer (2000) further states that effective parental

education programmes should also be created in order to help parents. According to Sen (1999), ‘functioning’ refers to a person’s achievement while ‘capabilities’ refers to the ability to achieve. Parents’ will be able to achieve in terms of participating in the education of their children only when they have been provided with real opportunities such as the one discussed above.

Desforges & Abouchaar (2003:64), write about an award-winning primary school in the US with a high level of parental involvement. The school devotes a great amount of time and energy, including resources, to educating parents. They introduced an art induction-programme which attracted the parents. The programme focused on supporting the parents in order to improve learner performance. Professionals to speak to the parents were hired including a follow-up evaluation to ascertain the impact of such a programme on both the parents’ and the learners. The findings reveal that parents who participated spoke about the efficiency of such a programme.

According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), it is not all parental partnership programmes that are channelled towards learners’ achievements or development. They further assert that ‘some are designed to provide for or improve what might be called, the infrastructure for achievement’ (p.68). Such programmes could be used to assist special-needs learners which will in turn encourage partnerships between parents, schools and the agents with the responsibility of providing resources to support the special-needs learners or homes. The assessment that followed after the programme reveals that by providing for the needy the agents have built a strong relationship between parents and the school.

2.10.4.1 ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The teacher, parent, community and learner partnership programmes should set their target towards enhancing the teachers, parents, learners and the community with the required skills and knowledge on how to engage in children’s learning so as to raise the level of parental involvement in children’s education as well as improve learner performance. Studies have shown the increasing practice of the Adult and Community Education Programme with almost 2.5 million participants annually (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:71). This area of involvement and the way it tries to carry people’s interest can also help communities to collaborate and work together. This programme aims to better the neighbourhood and, in the process, overhaul each family altogether with the community at large (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Recently, research indicates that there is a trending general practice on the programme

(Adult/Community Education). According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), participants benefit from the programme. Among the benefits are 'health, active ageing, self-esteem, communication skills and improvement in family relationships' (p.71). Such programmes can be used to increase parents' capability. According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), this type of programme could be used to enhance parents' confidence, high expectations, better parenting and parents' capacity in order to become involved in school.

Community education is usually carried out and constructed in the schools. Ball, in Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), describes the type of relationship that schools create together with the neighbourhood communities by saying that the target of such programmes is holistic school support to the entire neighbourhood and community. In the same manner, Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) states that 'Schools were providing resources and services to the community including support to children's family... Most were more narrowly engaged in community activities to promote the school's ends' (p.73). In summarising the study, Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) notes that there are 'significant benefits to schools... Their approaches are likely to be welcomed by many parents and community members and are likely to generate positive attitudes amongst both adults and the school's pupils' (p.73).

2.10.4.2 FAMILY LEARNING

According to Ofsted, in Desforges & Abouchaar (2003:73), family learning could be seen as a planned learning programme which is interested in bringing different families together to work with a common goal that focuses on collaborating with parents and their children in order to be able to learn or work together. Some of the most known and practised forms of family learning include the literacy and numeracy programmes established in the US by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) during the 1990's (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:73). This programme was recently reformed and given a new name – Basic Skills Agency (BSA). It was a programme used to develop adult and child learning skills which comprise training fundamental skills for parents and early literacy development from childhood as well as the collaboration between parent/child activities that deal with enhancing pre-reading, or reading skills. The idea behind this programme is to encourage unity between parents and the child, thereby adding value to the programme. The programme is also targeted at recruiting some of the most difficult-to-reach parents.

According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), the programme assumes that uneducated parents are not assisting in educational challenges that are facing their children. Setting up such a

programme was presumed to help both parents and children so as to break this cycle. The ALBSU/BSA Family Literacy Programme was in operation for a total of 96 hours of education-related activities for over three months. The purpose of such a programme is to engage parents and young learners in literacy and numeracy activities to enhance parental involvement and learner outcomes. Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) also mention, 'The programme was targeted on anti-risk children and parents with very low entry characteristics' (p.73). Children were taught intensively while their parents were exposed to literacy skills and learnt how to assist in their children's education. The programme was followed up with numeracy activities. An evaluation team found the programme very effective in terms enhancing parental skills, parental involvement in school and learners' academic performances. According to the capability approach, social goods or resources are only vital when they effectively develop individual capabilities. In other words, it is hoped that elements attached to this programme would be key to people's functionings.

Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) add that 'there were significant boosts to parental achievement to their confidence and to their competence in helping their children' (p.73). This programme, to a huge extent, impacted on family learning activities. Ofsted, in Desforges & Abouchaar (2003:74) in a similar topic, reports that Family Learning Programmes were a method used in low-income school communities. The programme tried to enhance literacy and numeracy skills by adopting the method of the BSA (discussed above).

2.10.4.3 PARENTING EDUCATION

Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. Parents spend much time with their child, starting from the child's birth. Therefore, they are very influential to the extent of their child's success in school and in society at large. Regardless of this huge potential influence on a child's success, many parents are not adequately prepared for this vital role in their child's learning. According to Comer (2000), every type of job will offer and require some sort of training or role specification. Most parents do not have formal training in child-rearing skills. Parents would require some sort of support in order to develop an effective parent/child relationship. In the words of Comer (2000), 'Ideally, they should be able to turn to school personnel, programme staff, or both, who can then support positive parenting by respecting and affirming the strengths and skills parents need to effectively fulfil their role' (p.48).

According to Lloyd in Desforges & Abouchaar (2003:76), parenting education is perceived to fall into three aspects: 'preparation about parenthood and family for school-age children;

preparation for parenthood for young people and education on relationships; and parenting skills for parents and carers' (p.76). The last aspect of parenting education is the most relevant regarding this current study as it seeks to establish what has been said about potential programmes to enhance parental involvement. According to Scott, in Desforges & Abouchar (2003), parenting education can take form in various aspects. It can be in the shape of parental training programmes on medical issues in terms of the therapy to help relieve some parents, or even their children, with psychological issues. Also, it can be in the shape of a broader home/school/family based assistance. This type does not really require much medical therapy but is focused more on a broader educational method aimed to help create a better relationship and understanding between adults and children.

Currently there is a rise in the practice of parenting education. Barlow, in Desforges & Abouchar (2003), reveals that over 40% of parents in the United Kingdom have been taking part in training on parents' education. More than 28,000 annually become involved. Lately, research has identified the urgent need and increasing requests for such programme. According to Desforges & Abouchar (2003), in the UK the Department of Health reviewed that four million in every 11 million children are at danger of missing the standardized development goals due to stressors in the family, like mental illness, violence, abuse of substances, lack of resources or social circumstances, which restrict parents from becoming involved in the education of their children. In this respect, Patters et al., in Desforges & Abouchar (2003), in a study on parents of children receiving medical therapy as a result of child behavioural problems mention that about 58% of the partaking parents indicated their interest in participating in such a programme. The findings show that the programme took the form of a remedy. The capability approach evaluates people's capability based on their health impact or status. It considers whether resources necessary for people's capabilities are present. For example, access to doctors, protection from infection or from diseases, and fundamental knowledge on healthy matters. In this case, the capability approach believes that people's well-being or development should consider their health status to enable them become whom they want. Medical support should increase the parents' capabilities in order to fully engage in their children's learning.

Moreover, Barlow, in Desforges & Abouchar (2003), state: 'Parent educational programmes are markedly effective in improving the behaviour of pre-adolescent children' (p.77). Additionally, parents in a different independent observers' report, affirm the effect of such programme. Barlow differentiates what makes the difference between behavioural and

relationship programmes. A behavioural programme is related to the Social Learning Theory while focusing on observable attitudes with a view to declining the undesirable force behind such behaviour and trying to reinforce such behaviour with a better behaviour. Relationship programmes consider a number of humanistic, transactional, emotional or psychodynamic models which emphasize the need for unity in solving people's problems. However, most programmes feature both methods. According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003:75), the report reveals that 'Overall, behavioural parent education programme produced the biggest change in children's behaviour' (p.75). The course (programme) is presented to parents on a weekly basis. Social workers are involved in training parents using some behavioural techniques. The process involves role-play and practice. Parents receive social services and help. Most of the parents were single mothers on low-income or social grants. Regarding the course (programme), there were reduced child behavioural issues – in parents as well.

In a similar report that is based on assessment of teenage mothers and their children. Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) note that 'parenting programmes which are directed specifically at teenage parents, can be effective in improving important infant outcomes such as the infant's response to the parent, and the infant ability to understand and respond to language' (p.75). They further conclude that programmes of this nature can have a huge impact in improving mothers' psychological health issues. Moreover, Scott, in Desforges & Abouchaar (2003:76), claims that parental programmes have a way of improving antisocial behaviour between families tremendously. Scott mentions that participant parents can also be trained in order to enhance reading skills. The mediating steps adopted in the programme did not only focus on supporting or building the parent's capacity but also ensured that all stakeholders involved in a child's education were supported in one way or another. According to Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), this method was used as it is believed that all the people involved constitute an important unit that influences the child's learning.

2.11 VOLUNTEERING

Research indicates that parental involvement is a key determinant of learner success. There are different ways parents can become involved in their children's education, of which one is through parents as volunteers. According to Epstein (2005), 'volunteer' involves any meaningful support toward school programmes or development which in turn benefits the child. There are many basic ways volunteering in education can take place. For instance, volunteer in school/classroom activities, such as helping teachers in the classroom, helping with fund-raising for an event, or even promoting school/community partnerships.

Volunteering would allow parents to give their skills or resources to supporting the school. Parents can devote their time in school events, such as sports, student-award events and other school programmes.

According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), when parents attend school events as spectators, it will not only send across a message to the school or learners that these parents care about their children but also will positively influence learner outcomes or school development. Volunteering is also a better way of linking the school and the community together. However, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) asserts that 'some teachers tend to consider parents from low-income communities as not being able to contribute to issues relating to education' (p.70). Teachers should understand that all parents care about their children and would want to assist in any way to ensure that their children succeed in their education. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) states that 'the amount of training a parent needs and the welcoming atmosphere of the school determine the success of volunteering rather than the educational background of parents' (p.71).

When arranging volunteer programmes, schools must ensure that parents are well informed and accepted in whatever volunteering role they choose to play. According to Comer (2000), schools believe that parents should willingly and by themselves volunteer, whereas parents expect the school's invitation so as to volunteer and such that will suit their skills or interests. The aim of using parents as volunteers is to enhance the learners' learning experience (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009).

According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), parental involvement increases when parents see that they are playing a role that influences learner performance. Research reveals that a warm welcome for parents into the school, as well as seeking support from parents, can hugely benefit both school and families (Comer, 2000). Comer (2000) also argues that the programme administrator should involve a trained coordinator to carry out the volunteering programme activities in school. The trained coordinator should be the leader of the training team. In other words, it is essential to form a group that will manage a volunteer programme in school. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:74) asserts that different parents have different interests and the time to help at school. Therefore, different programmes should be made available in order to contain all types of parents. Furthermore, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:14) states that whatever approaches the school decides to use in recruiting parents, the following should be considered: recruit the volunteers widely so that all families know that their time and talents are very

welcome; and arrange flexible schedules, meetings and events for volunteers that will also enable working parents to participate.

According to Comer (2000:96), recruitment is often the most challenging part of volunteering programmes. Therefore systematic methods of recruiting should be used. Recruiting should be open for the entire year in order to replace volunteers and get more support for new programmes. Comer further states that the 'two important recruiting issues must be immediately addressed: determining who could be a volunteer and finding ways to reach out and find volunteers' (p.96). Moreover, Comer (2000), mentions that most times schools see parents who work full-time as a potential barrier to volunteering. However, schools can use strategic initiatives to mediate this barrier. Most times, schools discount parents who work shifts – for example evening hours, weekends or even flexible hours as potential daytime volunteers. Comer further states that parents with a 9 to 5 work-schedule could volunteer their time during the evenings, the weekends or even at home. 'School should consider different types of available skills from parents who are hospital staff, police and fire department, radio and television stations and so forth' (p 97).

On volunteering, parents indicate their interest areas, and the school must communicate clearly what role is expected of them so that they can decide whether or not to participate. According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), after clearly demonstrating the expectations required of the parents in the roles they will play, it is worthwhile to limit any kind of confusion, anxiety or inefficiency. For instance, 'If a number of parents have offered to help with the binding and covering of textbooks, tell them they will be shown what to do, that the school will provide all materials and that they will be sent books that need to be bound and covered through their children' (p.74). Sometimes schools assign parents with a certain task to do but fail to give clear instructions of expectations or how to go about such a task. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) state that, 'the extent of parents training depends on the activities for which the parent has volunteered' (p.74). Lack of parents' preparation for any type of volunteering task is inevitable and will spell doom for such a programme.

Comer (2000:98) asserts that it is necessary to train and prepare parent volunteers before engaging them with any type of task. Adequate training can reduce confusion, inefficiency or frustration and increase mutual trust with the school (Comer, 2000:98). Moreover, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:74) affirms that training and orientation programmes should be conducted in such a way that they develop long-time relationships between parents and teachers. In other

words, training activities should accommodate all parents. According to Comer (2000), ‘training of parents’ volunteers ‘should be relevant, hands-on, and geared toward the specific skills and responsibilities of each volunteer’ (p.98). A management team must head the training seasons and also monitor the progress of such volunteering programmes. According to Robeyns (2003), for some capabilities the main improvement should be on fostering real friendships, effective guaranteeing and protection of freedom of thought, a high quality educational system, social practices and public goods. This means that a capability-approach framework covers all dimensions of human well-being in order for people to effectively function. In this sense, training parents for volunteering will improve their capability to get involved in the learning of their children, which will be seen as a great achievement.

It is clear from the above discussion that through the use of parent volunteers, the communication between learner and parent would improve in the same manner as learner outcomes and behaviour. Such an approach could enhance parents’ self-confidence to be able to work with school staff and increase the relationship between parents and teachers. The discussion above is important to this current study. The study sought to establish what constitutes parental involvement as well as what programmes could be used to enhance parental involvement. The training of parents through this type of programme would increase parents’ capacity and comfort at school.

2.12 CRITIQUES OF CAPABILITY APPROACH

This approach has been criticized by various scholars for not providing a list of capabilities. For example, Alkire (2008) argues that Sen’s capability approach fails to produce a recommended list required in promoting capabilities. Therefore it is unable to advance its own objective of promoting capabilities. In other words, in an attempt to evaluate the appropriate individual capabilities, one may miss out on the structures, institutions, policies or programmes that are supposed to develop these capabilities. That very information may be vital to others who are considering developing these same capabilities. Economists like John Roemer and Robert Sugden are amongst the critiques of this approach due to the fact that Sen was unable to propose a list of relevant capabilities to enhance functionings (Robeyns, 2003).

According to Robeyns (2003), the ‘capability approach is a framework of thought, a normative tool, but it is not a fully specified theory that gives us complete answers to all our normative questions’ (p.64). The capability approach suggests that in order to evaluate people’s development or well-being, the focus should be on their capabilities. However, it does not

propose which relevant capabilities should be taken into account. Amongst other philosophers, Martha Nussbaum (1998) has been a renowned voice arguing for Sen to endorse one definite list. Sen's reason against proposing such a list is because he prefers to leave the formulation of a possible capability list in the hands of the specific group of concerned people, taking into account their unique context (Sen, 1999). Sen argues that he does not have any problem with listing vital capabilities within a particular context for a specific purpose.

Nussbaum developed Sen's capability approach by offering a list of capabilities which she believes are a determinant of human well-being. They include: life (to be able to live a normal life as opposed to living a non-worthy life); bodily health (the ability to have good health); senses, imagination and thought (the ability to think and reason); emotions (being able to have feelings); practical reasoning (the liberty of conscience); affiliation (show concern for other human beings and being treated with dignity); other species (to be able to live in the world of nature with other species such as plants and animals); and having control over one's environment. For example, freedom to participate or make political preferences or being able to have rights over property and other moveable goods, and having real opportunities on an equal basis (Nussbaum, 2000:78).

However, Sen's response for not formulating a list of capabilities is for two reasons: one, is because he prefers to advance capability approach in order to make it a general approach for the evaluation of individual advantage and social arrangement rather than a well-defined theory. For example, about a valued life or lawful principles like the way Martha Nussbaum has developed the capability approach. The second reason is that the application of the capability approach will always be harmonized with other social theories and which might result to a different selection of valuable functionings. Hence, this means that proposing a list should influence the context of the people in question.

Another critique of the capability approach is from Alkire (2008) who criticizes the approach for paying too much attention to individual/group evaluations rather than potential analysis. However, Robeyns (2003:65), points out that one major advantage of the capability approach is the fact that it deals with an ethically individualistic theory. It means that each individual will be accounted for in the normative assessment. In other words, the ethically individualistic aspect of the approach makes it a desirable feature for people's well-being, including the existing inequality in the society.

2.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted how successful use of different intervention methods or programmes would increase the level of parental involvement. Deforges and Abouchaar (2003) asserts that successful parental involvement programmes require systematic planning. They further argue that such intervention programmes must generate parental empowerment and should be followed by evaluation. In a situation whereby it seems to have been established, such programmes/services should not be quickly withdrawn as a quick withdrawal is likely to be ineffective in developing the capabilities of these parents. Sen (1992), highlights the importance of capabilities in order to enhance people's functionings as a yardstick of well-being and development. Therefore, one can argue that there is a link between the capability approach and services or programmes to enhance parental involvement.

For many parents in the relevant reviewed literature, the real challenges they face include: poverty, lack of skills and knowledge, poor parental education and lack of resources. However, there is clear indication, based on the reviewed studies that the goal of these programmes is to assist the parents so that they can fully participate in their children's education. Therefore, the capability approach tries to identify barrier factors to parental involvement and to develop programmes or services which can be applied to benefit individual parents or groups.

Having explained how the capability approach is useful in terms of evaluating and improving parental involvement, the qualitative research method used in this study is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one the researcher listed the research aim, objectives as well as questions to guide the study. Therefore, it is important to once again re-state the research questions and objectives since the research methodology was used in order to address them. Four research questions which enabled the researcher to collect the needed information guided the study. They are as follows:

1. What do teachers perceive as parental involvement in their children's education in the context of your school?
2. What do teachers and parents perceive as barriers to parental involvement in the school?
3. What do teachers and parents perceive as strategies to promote parental involvement in the school?
4. How can the findings enhance the planning of an effective parental involvement programme in the school?

The overriding aim of the study was to establish teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in a low income school community. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To understand teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the context of the school.
- To investigate barriers facing parental involvement in their children's education in the school community.
- To explore strategies to promote parental involvement in the school community.
- To identify programmes that can be used to enhance parental involvement in the school community.

Hence, it was based on the above aim, questions and objectives the data was collected. Central to this study is an attempt to explore teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, barriers and solutions (strategies and programmes initiatives) to parental involvement in a low-income

primary school community. Capability approach framework was used to explore the nature of parental involvement in the context of the school. In an attempt to investigate the nature of parents' capabilities regarding the experiences of their children at school, this chapter will focus on the qualitative research design as it is the most suitable method in relation to the objectives of this study.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed the use of a qualitative research design. A qualitative research design is used by various academic disciplines. It is used in order to have an in-depth understanding of human behaviour in a society and the reason behind such behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:33). A qualitative inquiry method gives the researcher the opportunity to ask broad questions and collect word data from the participants. It involves planned techniques used in collecting data so as to be able to answer the research questions (Creswell et al., 2007). The design identifies potential participants who are to be studied and under which context they are to be studied.

The researcher used interviews, focus group interviews, questionnaires, field notes, document analysis and observation as the means of collecting data. In addition, qualitative research is about an interpretive and naturalistic approach which studies things in their natural settings, and tries to get more insight into people's attitudes and behaviour (Cohen et al., 2011). A qualitative research allows long responses from participants which are elaborated on as opposed to a quantitative research which uses statistical methods that correspond to characteristics of the subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher adopted the qualitative research design due to the fact that it explains findings from the perspective of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The qualitative research design is the best approach suited for a study of this nature due to the fact that the study is focused on establishing teachers' views on parental involvement, their perceived barriers and solutions to improve the level of parental involvement in a low-income school community.

There are six types of qualitative research design. They include action research, conceptual studies, the grounded theory, ethnography, historical research and a case study (Creswell et al., 2007).

3.2.1 THE QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

The qualitative case-study method was adopted since it is an approach of research that aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of the entity being studied (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). Cohen et al. (2011:302) argues that a case study could be in a single-situation setting – a single school, single community or social group, and a single class. It allows the voice of the powerless or voiceless to be heard, such as children, parents or marginalized groups (Creswell et al., 2007). Therefore, it becomes important to come to understanding the unique circumstances of the parents in the context of this research location. Yin (2009:185) suggests that a good example of case study must be valid, significant, all-round complete considering other possible methods, and should have adequate evidence and information. Due to the fact that the findings of a case study cannot be generalized, the researcher employed the use of the open-ended questionnaire technique so as to cover the lapses and generate more variables. Therefore the use of different sources of data collection enables the researcher to generate appropriate data as an alternative method. By doing so, the possibilities of biases are limited (Yin, 2009:135). According to Creswell et al. (2007), one of the key strengths of the case-study approach includes the application of different methods of data collection. However, various researchers have applied the case-study approach in a single situation to generate valid and rich information about human beings (Yin, 2009; Creswell et al., 2007). Hence the aim of the case-study research is to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific context. This method of investigation allows for the use of basic methods and others to generate a case finding or case-based themes. At the same time, it gives room to check data; it uses relevant literature and it uses triangulation and so forth (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, a qualitative case-study allows researchers to gain broad knowledge through a variety of means such as observation, face-to-face interviews and focus-group interviews or questionnaires.

One metaphor that is often used by social science researchers states that ‘a well selected case study makes up the dewdrop that reflects the world in general’. Moreover, McMillan & Schumacher (2010) define a qualitative case study as a bounded system, setting and context that provides a unique example of real people in real situations. Thus it focuses on generating meaning within a context. The goal of collecting data through a variety of means is to enhance the capabilities of the participants (parents). This research is aimed to assist participants through their various feedbacks to address the problem of parental involvement in low-income school communities. During the interview, some teachers actually mentioned the same issues in respect of parents’ ability to be fully involved in the education of their children. However,

in order to hear from the horse's mouth, parents were also given the opportunity to speak for themselves. The teachers aired their views with regard to their various perceptions of parental involvement, what they perceived to be the barriers/solutions, and what the programmes to promote parental involvement would look like. This approach was used not only for understanding the reason why there was less parental involvement from the participants (parents) but also to gain insight regarding how their environment and past history impacted on the behaviour of the parents towards the education of their children. Hence, this approach enabled the researcher to collect data about the circumstances surrounding the participants and how it influenced parental involvement (Creswell et al., 2007).

This process was carried out through focus-group interviews, semi-structured interviews, observation, an open-ended questionnaire, field notes and document analysis. Participants were carefully selected in this case study for valuable information about the case.

3.3 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

A qualitative research is planned effectively by identifying the sampled participants. Participant selection determines the research outcomes. In a qualitative research, the number of subjects or participants from whom the data are gathered is known as population selection (Cohen et al., 2011). According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010), most times sampling strategies, such as purposive samplings, are used to gain a better understanding of the research problems. Creswell et al. (2007), mention that 'purposive sampling is the method of sampling used in special situation where the sampling is done with specific purpose in mind' (p.178). The interview targeted a special group of participants whom the researcher felt they share the same experience or characteristics required in this study.

3.3.1 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling involves the selection of the most effective information-rich experts or cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:138). It provides the researcher with the best information to address the purpose of the research. Cohen et al. (2011:157) and Patton (2002:230) assert that purposive sampling allows the researcher to hand-pick the case(s) to be included in the sample on the basis of his/her judgment of their typicality. It is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases. Purposive sampling is a technique used in selecting knowledgeable participants about the case, for example, those with better knowledge about a particular case through their professional role or experiences (Cohen et al., 2011). It is a process whereby the researcher selects possible

participants who are capable of producing rich information in respect of the case. The researcher was assisted by the school principal to select relevant participants who were believed to be able to give quality information concerning the case. A single low-income school community was selected; six (6) teachers were selected and eight (8) parents were also selected. The selected participants are believed to be knowledgeable enough with regard to the phenomenon (parental involvement).

3.3.2 PROFILES OF THE SOUGHT-AFTER PARTICIPANTS

The school's location is situated in an informal-settlement black community where low-income job status is the norm. The researcher is interested in the economic and well-being status of the school community. Also, the research location was selected after a trip to the school in order to gain insight of parental involvement in the context of this school. Teachers who participated in this research were (6) six in number and they have the following characteristics: they at least have a Bachelor's Degree in education (it is believed that such level of education could prepare them to understand the phenomenon under investigation); a minimum of three years' experience in the same school (they are well adapted in the environment); they have knowledge of the conditions surrounding the learner's home environment. The teachers should be ready and willing to be interviewed; have the ability to state their views without fear or favour; to be seen as respected figures by their colleagues; and must be willing to complete a questionnaire. The teachers' profiles attributes having been selected, similar steps were followed in selecting (8) eight parent participants (profile) which include: having at least a child attending the primary school; having a low-paid job like gardeners and cleaners; a lack of educational qualifications; being knowledgeable with regard to the conditions in which their children live; being willing to be interviewed; possessing the ability to discuss their immediate situation; and being accessible. As a case study all these participant's profiles were sought after by the help of the school principal in order to achieve the objectives of this study.

3.4 DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

As component of a qualitative research method, the following data were used for the purpose of this study. They included observation, document analysis, semi-structured interviews (for teachers), open-ended questionnaires (for teachers), and focus-group interviews for parents. Also, face-to-face interviews with parents were employed. An unstructured interview was also conducted before the more structured interview. The unstructured interview provides the researcher with the opportunity of developing an understanding of not-yet-fully understood information (Daniel-Oghenetega, 2010). This process was done before the structured

interview. It was used as a guiding step towards developing a more structured interview. To ensure the authenticity of the data gathered from the interview, the interview was done after the literature had been reviewed. Participants were asked to check the transcribed data.

3.4.1 THE UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The unstructured interview is a technique designed to elicit information about the interviewee's opinions or perceptions in an informal way (Patton, 2002). Patton further states that unstructured interviews do not pre-define questions because they are most times employed as part of the on-going field work. An unstructured interview was used in this study without containing any deductive reasoning in order not to limit the free-flowing interaction with regard to the teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in low-income school communities (a case). In addition, their thoughts on barrier factors and solutions to parental involvement were also sought after. One of the key features of this method, according to Patton (2002), is the flexibility or freedom to use open-ended questions in probing the interviewee. Hence, this enabled the researcher to have more clarity regarding teachers' views on parental involvement, and how they came about to develop and held such views. Through the adaptation of this technique, questions to guide the more structured interview and focus-group interviews in the course of the field work was developed based on their different responses.

3.4.1.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The purpose of the interviews is to allow the researcher to have first-hand access to information in relation to teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. A semi-structured interview is best suited for a qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It allows the researcher to gain detailed responses from the participants. The method also allows for flexibility in the form of giving participants room to propose solutions and provide insight and ideas. The idea behind the use of the interview method was to have an in-depth understanding regarding parental involvement. The researcher employed the use of semi-structured interviews in an attempt to establish teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, what the teachers perceived to be the barriers to parental involvement, what they perceived to be strategies to enhance parental involvement in their school and, lastly, how they thought a programme to promote parental involvement would look like. The semi-structured interview, according to Creswell et al. (2007), is mainly used in qualitative research projects and it requires participants to respond to a set of structured research questions. The aim is to generate quality first-hand information which will help the researcher to gain more understanding regarding the participants' perceptions.

Creswell et al. (2007) asserts that one major characteristics of the semi-structured interview is its potential to produce rich data, which cannot be possible through the use of any other means. At the same time, it allows the researcher to explore and probe the participants. In other words, it affords the researcher the opportunity to elicit meaningful data from the interviewees. In addition, Cohen et al. (2011:422) claim that semi-structured interviews allow for inter-personal interaction, which is one of its strengths.

The researcher informed the participants about the purpose and objectives of the research and, thereafter, tried to make the participants comfortable. The researcher did not imply too much force or authority in order to allow the questions to flow. Such a step allowed the conversation to flow between the researcher and the interviewees. This method offered the interviewer the opportunity to structure a set of interview questions that were relevant to the research. At the same time, it allowed the interviewees to respond to the questions through their own perceptions. A total of (6) six teachers participated in the semi-structured interview. Three separated individual parents were also interviewed (those that could not make it in the focus-group interview). During the interview, the researcher used semi-structured interview guide.

The semi-structured interview guide allows the researcher to use open-ended question strategies so that the researcher will obtain as much information as needed for the purpose of the research. Furthermore, this method enables the researcher to probe and confirm transcribed data from the interviewee (Creswell et al., 2007). In order to guide the interview, questions were listed accordingly. The questions were structured systematically, from the opening questions to the closing questions. The guide was designed in such a way that questions were asked based on gaps that needed to be explored. A recording device was used during the interview.

3.4.1.2 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

In addition to the above-mentioned interviews, a focus-group interview was also conducted. A focus-group interview is an effective technique for gathering information in communities and schools. It enables participants to interact with one another, raise arguments with regard to the topic and clarify issues based on the topic of discussion (Cohen et al., 2011). In addition, McMillan & Schumacher (2010) argue that a group discussion is the most suitable research method in the study of communities and schools.

According to Cohen et al. (2011), a focus group is an effective way used to obtain accurate information on a particular research topic from a particular group which share similar

experiences and backgrounds. Creswell et al. (2007), argues that a focus-group interview gives participant members the opportunity to interact together and, by doing so, it produces general perceptions rather than an individual perception. The interaction between the group members, therefore, produced the data that will be analysed in the later stage of this research.

In this study, an open-ended focus-group interview was conducted consisting of five parents. It is necessary to keep the sample size moderate in order to elicit more comprehensive views and experiences. Initially the researcher does not want to include the parents as participants due to the difficulties of accessing some of the parents as a result of work commitment. But considering the fact that the researcher was eager to hear the parents' side in terms of possible challenges to parental involvement, and the reasons why they did what they did in terms of their children's education. It became important to involve the parents in a focus-group interview. Apart from the five parents who took part in the focus group interview, three other parents promised to join the group discussion but they could not come due to work commitments so they accepted the invitation from the researcher to come and conduct face-to-face interviews at their various homes where observation was carried out too.

The reason for employing focus-group interviews was due to their efficiency, such as the ability to produce themes and topics, their flexibility in terms of open-ended questions, their ability to gather qualitative information, their useful nature which encourages group participation instead of individual. In addition, a focus-group interview is essential in qualitative research because of its useful nature in covering broad issues which may not be possible when using alternative means (Cohen et al., 2011). According to Cohen et al. (2011) and Creswell et al. (2007), some of the advantages of a focus-group interview include its ability to probe participant members, its ability to generate information from various participants, its ability to gather data based on participants' values, its belief system and, also, its ability to gather different views or opinions as well as to allow the participants to speak with their own voices. Throughout the process the investigator (researcher) emphasized the importance of full participation, articulation, expression of feelings, honesty and not to be intimidated by other opinions.

It is important to consider factors which may pose a threat to the validity of the data. With the help of the school principal, a meeting room (staff room) with proper seating arrangements was arranged for the group discussion in order not to have distractions. All the participants were encouraged to get to the school meeting venue at the same time.

3.4.1.3 DESIGNING THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

The focus-group interview guide was developed around key issues to guide the focus-group discussion. A focus-group interview guide, according to Creswell et al. (2007), provides the ground rules and also structures the questions in a way that will guide group interaction based on the research questions. The focus-group interview guide was designed in such a way that it encouraged full participation among the participants. It was also drafted in a way that made use of open-ended questions to probe the participants in order to achieve clarifications. To explore the barrier factors facing parental involvement, the participants were asked what they perceived to be barriers to parental involvement, such as the restraining factors that prevent them from fully participating in their children's education. They were also asked to suggest solutions. The group members discussed restraining-barrier factors which they experienced with regard to their backgrounds. There were also suggestions to overcome these barrier factors. They were further asked for more thoughts regarding the topic.

The goal was not only to have a clear understanding of general perspectives, but also to create room for individual opinion. There were actually some different perceptions and opinions which also helped to explore more concepts. The researcher, as the moderator, clearly stated the ground rules, goals and objectives of the research. The researcher developed the questions which guided the focus-group interview and at the same time explained the ground rules including the research goal, which helped in regulating the discussion among group members.

3.4.1.4 RECORDING THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

One of the techniques, according to Creswell et al. (2007), used by qualitative data collection involves the use of a recording device which enables the researcher to conduct a more accurate data analysis. Therefore, an audio-recording device was used to record the focus-group interview. In addition, notes were taken during the interview session.

Field notes refer to systematic numerical data generated from the observation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Field notes was also taken down, it enabled the researcher to jot down things that could not be recorded by an electronic device, such as participants' anxiety. Field notes are required in a qualitative study due to the fact that there is so much 'body language', or gestures, that could not be interpreted (Cohen et al., 2011).

3.4.2 THE OPEN ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

According to Cohen et al. (2011:383), an open-ended questionnaire allows participants to write a free account in their own terminology to respond in their own various ways and avoid the

limitation of pre-set categories of response. Therefore, this qualitative method of enquiry (open-ended questionnaire) was employed mainly for the teachers. Participants choose their own words, write their thoughts or state the reasons behind their opinions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:192). In this study, an open-ended questionnaire was adopted in order to gather more information from the teachers regarding the objective of the study. According to Cohen et al. (2011), questionnaires are best used in a case study where the questions involve exploration. In this case study, a less-structured and open-ended questionnaire was used to understand the explanation of the participants (teachers).

3.4.3 OBSERVATION

According to Marshall and Rossman, in Cohen et al. (2011:456), observational research (or field research) is a systematic way of gathering data, such as noting and recording events, behaviour and artefacts (objects) in a social setting. It enables the researcher to take part in what they are observing so as to have a better understanding of the phenomenon. People's actions may be different from what they say or do. In that case, observation allows the researcher to watch every day-by-day behaviours that might be taken for granted (Cohen et al., 2011:456). An observation technique simply studies the behaviour that takes place in a natural setting, unlike the artificial environment of a controlled laboratory setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Through observing the school environment as well as the learners' home environment, such a method assisted in enriching the data collected in this research as well as provides first-hand information on complex phenomena that cannot be easily approached. Social-science researchers or educational researchers often employ observation methods in natural settings like schools, classrooms, playgrounds and so forth. Thus, observation includes both visual and oral data that are required to be written down (Cohen et al., 2011:456).

Observation was used to enable the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the people being observed. However, the researcher was not in a hurry to place meanings on the behaviour or actions of the participants being observed. This was important. According to Creswell et al. (2007), the researcher must be careful to avoid bias or develop means to contain it. Before the observation, the researcher ensured that he had developed the purpose and area of focus in terms of the observation.

3.4.3.1 NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION

The researcher used the naturalistic observation method to gather data. Different events that occurred during the observation were captured as they naturally occurred in both the school

and home environment without the awareness of the participants. The idea was to observe the participants based in their natural settings, their daily activities, behaviours and social environment (Cohen et al., 2011:465). Therefore, the presence of the researcher did not result in any change of behaviour. The participants demonstrated their real or natural behaviour even in the presence of the researcher. During the face-to-face interview with the three parents who had missed the focus-group discussion due to work commitment, the researcher spent time observing their various home settings. The things observed included the standard of the house/shack, the size or space in the house, book shelves, communication between parents and children with regard to school matters, the kind of house chores expected of the children before and after school, the availability of electric devices such as a DVD machine or television set, communication devices such telephone or computer, and the neighbourhood environment as a whole. Naturalistic observation enabled the researcher to check the participants' accounts, their definition of terms and behaviour that might not be mentioned during the interview such as facial expression, body language or gestures.

All these were reflected in the interviewee responses. Another means of data collection that is associated with observation is taking field notes. In the situation whereby the researcher could not take down notes when the events occurred, the researcher wrote them down immediately when the researcher's memory was still in retention.

3.4.4 DOCUMENT STUDY

A document is a written, drawn, presented or recorded representation of thoughts, the event timeline and agenda of any organisation. Documents take two forms, which include personal and official documents. According to Cohen et al. (2011), personal documents refer to information written or recorded for personal use, such as diaries, letters and photographs, while official documents include committee minutes, official reports, memoranda and an events timeline.

The study made use of the school document, in order to complement the responses made from the interview, by carefully evaluating the school documents and its contents. Creswell et al. (2007), claims that researchers use document to collect data due to the fact that they contain written documents or communication that may reveal more on the phenomenon that is being investigated. The researcher requested the school principal to be allowed to analyse school documents containing events and timelines regarding parental involvement and other school activities. The researcher carefully evaluated the authenticity of the contents in such documents

before using them. Document analysis was not only assessed in order to gather valuable data. The researcher also made use of a literature review which is in written form.

3.4.4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review creates crucial links between existing knowledge and the research problem being investigated which provides significant information about investigating the topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The review helps researchers to assess information of other studies that are closely related to the study being investigated (Cohen et al., 2011).

This study adopted the use of a literature review to provide an understanding of the concept of parental involvement and this informed the developing of the interview guide.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness in research is used to explain the research criteria due to the fact that some of the quantitative research criteria cannot provide precise explanations in terms of qualitative results since they signify a different philosophical perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Trustworthiness refers to the procedure used in checking the trustworthiness of the data findings. Trustworthiness, according to Cohen et al. (2011), is used to strengthen research findings to show that the result is worthy of attention. Furthermore, they suggest four criteria for classifying the quality of qualitative research, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. All these procedures were followed in this research to ensure trustworthiness.

3.5.1 CREDIBILITY

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher employed the use of multiple data to analyse the findings generated from the participants. Credibility deals with trustworthiness, it means that the outcome of a study is believable (Andrew, 2004). Also, the researcher recognized the importance of using appropriate research methods and employed the use of well-established qualitative research methods. Andrew (2004) suggests that ensuring credibility is one of the crucial elements in promoting trustworthiness. Hence, different methods were used in gathering data from the respondents, such as the method of questioning and data analysis. Other strategies were also used during the field work, such a quick incorporate into the culture of the school community like the mutual greetings and extension of friendship.

3.5.2 TRIANGULATION

In this study triangulation played a crucial role to help ensure that the findings are as a result of the participants' experiences and ideas. Cohen et al. (2011:195), define triangulation as the use of multiple means of data gathering in a study of human behaviour. Triangulation techniques, as claimed by Andrew (2004), tend to explain in full detail the quality and complexity of people's behaviour and it reduces the effects of the researcher's biases. Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2011) asserts that 'Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in a qualitative research' (p.195). They further state that being solely dependent on a single data-gathering method may result to biases or distort the quality of the result. Hence, triangulation reduces the problem of biases and depends more on information gathered through different methods of data collection. Such information includes face-to-face interviews, focus-group interview, open-ended questionnaires, document analysis, field notes or observation, which constitute the data-collection method used in this research. In brief, different sources like the ones mentioned above were all used in generalizing the data findings of this study.

3.5.3 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability refers to the extent to which the data findings can be transferable or consistent in a different context (Creswell et al., 2007). To generalize the findings of this study would require the adaptation of well-established qualitative research methods just as the methods used in this study, although using the same method may produce one result today and a different one tomorrow because human beings are unpredictable. However, Andrew (2004), suggests that it is the primary responsibility of the researcher to ensure that adequate information with regard to the field work is made available so that the researcher can make such a transfer. Hence it is the duty of the researcher to enhance such transferability. Andrew (2004) highlights the importance of informing the reader about all the necessary boundaries of the study such as the number and status of the participants who took part in the study, the method used in gathering and analysing the data, any limitations regarding the type of people who generated the data, including the length and period of the research. Such vital information must be considered before the process of transferability.

3.5.4 DEPENDABILITY

According to Cohen et al. (2011:199), dependability refers to the consistency of a similar result over a group of respondents over time. Dependability emphasizes the need to account for any notable changes that occurred in the context of the research site. In order to address

dependability, the researcher accounted for different variables which possibly altered the experiences, behaviours and perceptions in respect of parental involvement. Most of these occurred due to the experiences and background of the participants. Such explanation regarding dependability would provide the reader with an in-depth understanding of the extent to which the research findings would be consistent in the case of replication on a similar group of respondents.

3.5.5 CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability, according to Andrew (2004), refers to the degree in which the reader can confirm the data that emerged from the findings. It is concerned with the extent to which an external auditor can confirm the data that emerged from the findings. To promote confirmability, a detailed methodology and data-analysis technique should be provided by the researcher to allow the reader to confirm how far emerging data from the research may be validated. Confirmability is mainly concerned with freedom from bias in the data findings. To address the problem of biases in the findings of this study, several approaches were used that include a back translator, a critical research friend who checked the data findings and analysis, and suitable instruments for the purpose of the research. In addition, participants were asked to confirm the data during the field work.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing and interpreting raw data by categorizing the data into new knowledge (Cohen et al., 2011). According to Creswell et al. (2007), qualitative data analysis is a range of recorded words or observations which attempt to capture the participant's perceptions from the inside. Qualitative data analysis is usually generated into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the participants and the situation surrounding them.

Therefore, the researcher employed the use of content analysis to explain the significant themes that emerged from the raw data. Content analysis involves the process of identifying themes, coding and groupings in line with patterns of data (Cohen et al., 2011:568). It is used for codes and categories. Creswell et al. (2007), argue that content analysis is used mainly in qualitative studies to analyse responses to open-ended questions, interviews, observation or focus-group interviews. Each revealing account from the respondents, such as focus-group discussions, interviews, open-ended questionnaires, observations, or field notes were written up into transcripts.

Cohen et al. (2011:564), have noted the essentials of the quantitative nature of content analysis by stating, 'At its simplest level, content analysis involves counting concepts, words or occurrences in documents and reporting them in tabular form' (p.64). This statement captures the important aspects of content analysis.

The researcher deliberately began the process of data analysis during the interview session in an attempt to identify emerging themes. During the early stages in the field work a rough definition and explanation of certain phenomenon were developed. This technique, according to Cohen et al. (2011), is called an interim data-analysis method and can be used to explain or develop the about-to-be-emerged phenomenon. This technique enabled the researcher to verify from the interviewees whether the interpretation of their responses reflected their own views. Creswell et al. (2007) emphasizes the need to frequently verify conclusions from the participants who generated the data in order to collect additional and more precise data. This process involves the above-mentioned interim data-analysis technique. Therefore, verifying conclusions was done whenever the need arose throughout the field work. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2011) the researcher, transcribed all data retrieved from the respondents such as the focus-group discussion, interviews, field notes, document analysis, observation or open-ended questionnaires. Verbatim data was retrieved into text based on categories before the process of analysis. After data had been retrieved into text, it was coded and categorized based on significant contents or themes that relate to the research questions. Also, data was processed manually. This was considered appropriate for the purpose of this research due to the fact that it allowed the researcher to reveal deeper meanings and emerging patterns from the transcripts. Creswell et al. (2007), argues that computer-assisted data analysis sometimes can be deceptive and very often cannot effectively engage during data analysis.

In the processes of data analysis, the researcher identified insights, ideas, comments and themes which emerged from the data. These were noted down in memos. Memos allow the researcher to reflect on data, behaviours or situations in which phenomena occurred as they were being analysed (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, the researcher carefully read the data repeatedly. He then identified and labelled some meaningful parts of the data into relevant categories. Afterwards themes were framed. Throughout the process of data analysis, the researcher addressed issues such as reflections, comments, opinions, ideas, insights, quotes, personal response, evaluations, suggestions, connections, links between codes and categories, links between parental involvement, and the theories used in the study.

Given the sampling method and participants profiles including the method of data collection and analysis, the next section will deal with the issue of gaining access to the research field. Also, research ethics will be addressed.

3.7 GAINING ACCESS /RESEARCH ETHICS/INFORMENED CONCENT

Before having access to any form of data, or gaining entrance into field work, the researcher sought permission from the Western Cape Education Board, relevant school authorities such as the principal, the teachers and, also, the parents who participated in this study (Cohen et al., 2011:139). The purpose of the research and objectives were clearly stated to the participants.

3.7.1 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Research ethics are the consideration of right and wrong, such as acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours (Cohen et al., 2011:77). In any research project, ethical norms are expected to guide such research approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Ethics focuses on the research study discipline. Participants were assured of confidentiality in terms of their real identities and revealing the findings. The principle of informed consent arises from research ethics.

Informed consent in research includes obtaining the consent and co-operation of participants either verbally or in writing (Cohen et al., 2011:76). The principle of informed consent in research is based on the fact that participants have a right to freedom and self-determination. Participants were assured that should anything go wrong in the research, participants had every right to withdraw from the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Participants were voluntarily engaged; they cannot be persuaded to complete the questionnaires or take part in the interviews. So they were properly informed in both a verbal and written form.

3.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The time and the scope of the study may not permit this study adequately to do justice to some of the related questions regarding teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. Also, it is difficult to generalize the findings of a qualitative research method. Qualitative research most times is conducted using the modest population sample, thereby making it difficult to justify the data to a broader population. The study was limited by the purposive sampling that was used. Hence, it would also be difficult to generalize the findings. Other geographical locations could have been added. Parents' own views with regard to parental involvement could have been sought after.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed numerous research designs associated with qualitative data collection and analysis. The chapter has addressed the research design suitable for this study. These include qualitative case-study design, participant selection for the case study, methods used for data collection and analysis, research ethics, and so forth. These methods were adopted in order to promote the trustworthiness of the findings. The next chapter presents the analysis of the findings.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings based on the qualitative research approach adopted for the purpose of the study, like the open-ended questionnaire, observation or field notes, a document study, interviews and focus-group interviews.

This chapter will systematically discuss and modify the generated data into categories/themes that will give the reader an understanding in terms of the concepts or ideas that have emerged from the data. The capability approach and Epstein's six model of parental involvement were used in order to understand the result.

Although Epstein's six model theory of parental involvement was used from the outset (chapter two) with other reviewed literatures to frame the study in respect of parental involvement, the findings were not patterned in line with this model or theory because the respondents were asked to give their own understanding of parental involvement in their school context. Therefore, the basic themes and categories were given room to emerge from the data so as to shed light on the discussion of the findings. Quotes were used to demonstrate the common views/ideas of the respondents.

Bearing in mind the aims and objectives of the research, one of the best ways to organize the results is based on the themes and categories extracted from the respondents' feedback under the following themes:

- Teachers' understanding of parental involvement in the context of their school.
- Perceived barriers facing parental involvement in their children's education in the school community.
- Perceived strategies to enhance parental involvement in the school.
- Programmes that can be used to promote parental involvement in the school.

4.2 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The table below shows the theme that emerged from teachers' understanding of parental involvement. It appears that teachers have limited knowledge of parental involvement as

teachers mentioned but, only school-based activities that are associated with parental involvement. Those activities include communication, homework, volunteering and so forth.

Table 4.1: Teachers’ understanding of parental involvement

The table below shows the theme that emerged based on teachers understanding of parental involvement.

Teachers’ understanding of parental involvement in the school.	Frequency N=6 Teachers	%
Communication	5	83
Homework	3	50
Volunteering	3	50
Fund-raising	2	33
Parent Teacher Forum	2	33
Providing for the child’s needs	3	50

Teachers’ responses regarding their understanding of the activities associated with parental involvement shows from table 4.1 that they have limited understanding of several activities associated with parental involvement (see Chapter 2.2). Table 4.1 shows that teachers were only able to mention but a few instances of mainly school-based parental involvement. This shows that teachers are only aware of those school-based activities associated with parental involvement.

During the interview, most teachers gave their own account of parental involvement by referring more on school-based involvement than home-based involvement. Other than homework, no reference was made in terms of home-based activities, like home discussions with the child reflecting on what had been done at school, supervision at home, or even shared decision-making which also involves the parents. Most of the responses did not include school-community partnerships or home visiting, as what makes up parental involvement. Teachers emphasized more on the provision of a child’s basic needs which they believed will help to make their work easier; as one teacher puts it, *‘Parents must ensure that they provide the child with all the basic needs so that they can come to school prepared to learn’*. Respondent teachers

also indicated that parents should always communicate with teachers in order to keep them informed, assist in homework, avail themselves as volunteers, attend the Parents Teachers Forum, and involve themselves in fund-raising and providing for the child's basic needs.

4.2.1 COMMUNICATION

Most teachers (83%) gave their views based on the communication channel between parents and the school. They indicated that parental involvement should include communication between parents and teachers. The responses indicated that there were no effective channels of communication between parents and teachers. For example, a teacher (Ms B) reported, *'Some parents here (in this school) even if you write them letter that the child is not doing very well or invitation, they do not respond and they do not check the learner's book even when they do get the letter so I think the parents should keep in touch.'* Letters sometimes are not efficient, especially when they are relying on the learners to deliver them. As one teacher puts it: *'Well, there are some learners whom you will give letters but you will be surprise that they do not pass such letters and sometimes their numbers are not going so when you call them you can't get them.'*

The reports from these teachers are in line with the observation made by the researcher during the early stages of the field work; most parents did not respond to the consent letter sent by the researcher regarding permission to participate in the interview (it was with the help of the principal who helped to arrange capable parents who honoured the research). Another teacher mentioned, *'Communication is always important... There must be communication in order to achieve iii (the, the, the) main core business of the school so... the school must communicate with the parents timelessly regarding learner behaviour, regarding I (the) learner progress and school events or programmes.'* This response is in line with Epstein (1995) who stated that communication should involve communicating with families about school programmes and information about children's progress. The issue of communication is relevant in terms of parents' capability. If parents could not function, then there would be no need to consider capabilities or opportunities in order to function. In the context of this study, Sen (1999) suggests that communication or information plays a crucial role in the development of parents' capability, which is required to participate in their children's education and which is of value to every individual parent. When there is an effective communication channel, parents will be able to stay informed. Parents will only be able to function when there is effective communication between them and the teachers. Teachers also pointed out homework as part of parental involvement.

4.2.2 HOMEWORK

Parental involvement is perceived, by fifty percent of the teachers, as taking part in the homework given to their children. The responses reveal that teachers want parents to be involved in their children's homework. In the words of one teacher (Ms B), *'Parents can, while at home, check the homework given to the learner and try to help the child out... but the parents we have here don't help their children in homework. So they don't help the teachers as well.'* Another teacher stated, *'If you give the children homework, you find out that they did not do the homework... you better keep them here so that they do them in the school.'* According to Nadine et al. (2008), homework is a literacy activity that involves the influence of home and school. The findings regarding parental involvement in the aspect of helping in homework is in consonance with Epstein's (1995) model of parental involvement of overlapping both home and school influence. Epstein emphasizes that schools and families have responsibilities in the education of the children. The observation report revealed that most parents did not help in terms of the learner's homework as learners were most times busy with homework at school.

However, the inability of parents to participate in their children's homework was attributed to a lack of parental education. For example, one of the teachers mentioned, *'The problem could be because most parents here are not educated. Therefore, they cannot help.'* According to the capability approach by Sen (1992), the focal point is on what a person is able to do or be. It is interested in the real opportunities one has in order to function properly, which include education and other basic capabilities. From a capability point of view, any restriction of basic capabilities of any kind hinders the development of such capability. Thus, parents' lack of education interferes with their capability to be able to help in their children's homework. Moreover, the researcher noted (observed) that there was no formal school policy on parental involvement in the school; this has been stated as the key determinant of a home/school involvement programme (Epstein and Sanders, 2000:289). Teachers also mentioned parents as volunteers as being one aspect of parental involvement.

4.2.3 PARENTS AS VOLUNTEERS

The findings revealed that parents as volunteers have a significant effect on school programmes, with fifty percent of the respondent teachers believing that parents as volunteers will, to a great extent, help the school to achieve its projects. For example, one of the teachers mentioned that *'volunteering parents can assist in the area of clearing the grass since they (parents) cannot raise fund to hire labourers as the school is planning to have a sports programme'*. When asked whether she is satisfied with the level of parental involvement at the

school, she (the teacher) replied, 'No!' The researcher can observe the frustration. She further stated: *'Parents were asked to come and help with the clearing of the grass so that we can have a successful sports programme. Can you imagine? Only a few came, but still, they want learners to be involved in sports.'* This response is in line with the literature (Comer, 2000:92) which states that parents can volunteer to help build a school fence or playground such as soccer pitch. Parents can volunteer at special events in school or programmes. However, parents from the focus-group participants gave their reasons for not coming. Some of them mentioned that they could not come because they were engaged at work.

Another teacher gives his own account: *'I see volunteering as meaningful parental involvement... During the heritage day, we cook traditional food which I would like the parents to come and help out... Even when they come their children will be happy to see them in the school premises and try to impress them by putting up proper behaviour.'* The reviewed literatures confirm this. According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), the level of parental involvement increases when parents perceive their role as having a direct influence on their children's academic performance. Research revealed that a warm welcome of parents into the school and seeking support from parents can hugely benefit both school and families (Comer, 2000). Teachers also indicated fund-raising as part of parental involvement.

4.2.4 FUND-RAISING

Thirty-three percent of the teachers from the table indicated that fund-raising is an important part of parental involvement. Some teachers expected parents to assist with funding school projects. For example, one teacher mentioned, *'You see for over a period of time now we have three toilets which are out of order. We need help as the government has not responded to our plea...Here I expect parents to say ok, let's contribute and fix it.'* The researcher asked if the parents were aware of the broken toilets. The teacher replied, *'Yes, but they can't do anything because most of them are poor.'* Another respondent stated: *'We need to develop some areas in the school but we don't have fund and these parents they cannot raise fund because they are a lot of poor parents here.'* Sen (1992) conceptualized poverty as a lack of resources or deprivation of capability. In the context of the school-community parents, poverty has denied them the capability to be involved in their children's education. Parents could not assist with fund-raising because they had been restricted by certain constraining factors attributed to poverty, such as the lack of resources or socio-economic factors and so forth. The correspondence here revealed that teachers associated parental involvement with fund-raising; however, a lack of resources deprived parents from raising the needed funds.

4.2.5 PARENT TEACHER FORUMS

The Parent Teacher Forum seemed to be the primary contact between teachers and parents. However, this has diminished as parents do not deem it necessary. This may be because of the disagreement between parents and teachers. Throughout the field work period the researcher observed that there was no event concerning parent teacher forums. Also, the school document data revealed that there are no recent parental involvement meetings other than the emergency meeting with grade six learner's parents in particular due to learner disruptive behaviours (fighting and smoking inside the school environment). Thirty-three percent of the teachers pointed to the Parent Teacher Forum (PTF) meeting as one of the ways of encouraging parental involvement. Findings reveal that parents can become involved by attending PTF meetings. A teacher (Ms B) indicated that it was *'important that parents should attend School General Meetings'*.

Another teacher stated: *'In the past, we used to have a Parent Teacher Forum... So, if we could go back to that because we have those things we teach the children in the meeting... Sometimes we are not calling them (parents) for the misbehaviour of their children... Sometimes, it's just to come and get to know and mingle with the educators so that they feel that educators are approachable... Sometimes, the parents don't want to come to school because some of the parents are less educated and they feel they can't communicate with the educators and sometimes, teachers feel I can't communicate with them because they are less educated... If we as educators can show them that we are approachable, they can approach us for anything... Then everything will be fine.'* This opinion is congruent with the literature, according to Comer (2000:125), who suggests that schools must develop a manuscript during Parent Teacher Meetings indicating parents' rights and responsibilities at school. According to Comer, such a book will explain to parents about rules, which include discipline and roles as well as how to approach teachers in terms of disagreements on any unfavourable school policy. This is also in harmony with Epstein's (1995) hindrances to parental involvement, in which she stated that there may be some feelings of unwelcome by parents in the school due to differences in education, staff interaction or attitudes towards the parents. Responses from the teachers indicated that teachers often have disagreement issues with parents which result in ineffective Parent Teacher Meetings. The researcher also observed from the school document book that for the past two to three years there has been no Parent Teacher meeting. The last meeting was as a result of Grade Six learners who smoked Indian hemp in the school yard. The meeting was called to address the problem.

However, judging from the interviews, it seems that teachers were not exposed to parental involvement during their preparation as teachers. None of the participants have undergone training of any kind on parental involvement. This may be the reason that they find it difficult to manage the parents.

4.2.6 PROVIDING FOR THE CHILD'S BASIC NEEDS

Fifty percent of the respondents mentioned provision of the child's basic needs as another dimension of parental involvement. The participants indicated that it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that they provide for their children. A teacher, Mr. K, responded by saying, *'And so another thing is that parents must make sure that the children come to school with their stomachs full.'* This response may be as a result of poverty, which is norm in the context of the school community. Another teacher stated: *'Parents should provide the learners with everything that is needed because if nothing is provided, children cannot learn and it will make our job difficult... Parents must provide for them finance, stationery, school uniforms and material support'*. The findings revealed that for children to progress in school, their entire human needs have to be provided. Additionally, the researcher noted with concern that parents from the school community appear to be struggling to cater for the above-listed children's needs. On the other hand, parents from the focus-group interviews indicated that they put their best efforts to providing for the learners, although their main challenge is a lack of resources or jobs.

Sen (1987) sees functioning as achievement, while capability is the effective opportunity to achieve. This showed in the life of parents as, the ability to provide for their children's basic needs or doing that which they value doing. Therefore, a parent is expected to provide for his or her child, which is referred to by Sen as functioning. In this case, it can be argued that restraining factors, such as poverty, restrict parents' capability to function. Therefore, the ability to possess the resources needed for a child's basic needs becomes an opportunity or capability.

What emerged from the findings revealed that teachers have limited knowledge of parental involvement. It is noteworthy that the teachers' understanding of parental involvement is more of parents' activities in the school, such as communication, volunteering, fund-raising, Parent Teacher Forum (PTF), and providing for the child's basic needs. They emphasized more on communication between parents and teachers and the provision of basic needs for the children. This was probably because they believed that parents' provision of stationery for the learners

will make their job easier. Activities associated with home-based involvement were mentioned but a few like homework supervision, home discussions between parent and child on school subjects, or visiting the library (took the lime light). Also, parental involvement, like including the parents in school decision-making and collaboration between school, families and community, was not mentioned. This may be because teachers indicated that they were not prepared in the area of parental involvement during their training as teachers. Thoughtful, there is a need to introduce teachers to parental involvement workshop programmes. Moreover, teachers believed that restricted opportunities such as poverty and a lack of parental education contributed to the problem of less parental involvement in the school.

4.3 PERCIEVED BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The table below shows the participant’s perceived barrier factors to parental involvement (emerged theme). It should be noted that most of the participants perceived barrier factors such as financial constraints, lack of parental education including lack of job opportunity and so forth as some of the major barriers to parental involvement.

Table 4.2: participant’s perceived barriers to meaningful parental involvement

The table below shows the participant’s perceived barriers to parental involvement.

Perceived barriers to parental involvement	Frequency		%	
	N=6 Teachers	N=3 parents	Teachers	Parents
Parents financial challenges	6	2	100	66
Lack of parental education	6	3	100	100
Negative teacher attitudes	3	2	50	66
Lack of effective communication channels	3	3	50	100
Time factor	6	3	100	100
Lack of job opportunity	2	3	33	100
Lack of training for both parents and teachers	2	2	33	66
Environmental barriers	2	3	33	100

4.3.1 PARENTS' FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

The table above (table 4.2) portrays that parents' financial challenges were reported as one of the main restraining factors to parental involvement by both the teachers and parents (teachers N=6 or 100% and parents N=2 or 66%). As expressed by one teacher: *'Because most parents in this community are poor, they do not provide stationery or school uniform for the learners... So, they develop this negligent attitude of not coming in contact with the school when we requested for them to come.'* This indicates that some parents avoid school contact because they felt they will be embarrassed. Another teacher expressed her dissatisfaction with the level of parental involvement; she lamented: *'Because these parents are poor, they just send the children to school... So, everything is left in the hands of the teachers.'*

Concerning school-based activities as mentioned above, parents' financial status hinders their parental involvement at school. Some parents attributed their lack of parental involvement to the financial challenges which they are facing. A typical example is in the words of one of the individual interviewed parent: *'Look, we are poor, we can't afford anything, but we want to make sure that our children receive better education... We struggle to provide for our children's academic-needs, that's why we can't question the teachers on the type of education our children receive.'* Most parents from the focus group interview accepted this remark. The above quote indicated that some parents are restricted due to their financial challenges. They believed that their financial status poses a stumbling block to their involvement in the education of their children. This is in line with the literature by Daniel-Ogenetega (2010) which reveals that more than 1.2 billion households across the world are affected by poverty, which in turn impacts negatively on parental involvement in their children's education. The study findings revealed that parents' capability has been limited by financial constrain.

The capability approach by Sen (1999) rejects monetary income as a core measure of well-being. Rather, it is provided as an alternative approach to evaluate human well-being and development because it is mainly focused on the objective condition of a person; what a person can do and be; including a combination of opportunities and success. Sen emphasizes the importance of capability to enable people's functioning. Nussbaum & Sen (2003:9) refer to basic capability as the effective opportunity to attain crucial functioning; whereas functioning refers to achievement of what a person want to do. Parents desired to actively participate in their children's education, as indicated by participant parents themselves. In this regard, an individual parent's capability is in line with his or her financial status, while functioning is referred to an individual parent's ability to support his or her children's education.

Given this explanation, practically any hindrance to people's basic capability would be referred to as poverty. Therefore, poverty as the inability to obtain basic capabilities can also be seen traditionally as a lack of income. Hence failure of funding or a lack of income restricts parents' capability to become involved in the education of their children. These findings were in support of Adams & Waghid (2005), who mentioned that a low level of education and poor economic condition contributed to low levels of parental involvement.

4.3.2 EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF PARENTS

Parents' educational levels were perceived as one of the barrier factors to parental involvement (teachers N=6 or 100% and parents N=3 or 100% parents). A parent's lack of education was perceived to be a barrier to meaningful parental involvement by the interviewed teachers. Matshe (2004:101) found that poor levels of parental education contributed to a lack of effective parental involvement in the former disadvantaged (low-income) communities in South Africa. Moreover, the parents interviewed had a limited education background and because of that they shied away from being involved in their children's education. They felt that they were less equipped to be actively involved in their children's education. One participant teacher explained: *'Well, here we've got children from informal settlements whereby most of their parents are not educated. They've got less skill to be involved in their children's schooling... So, they want you the teacher to do everything pertaining to the learning of their children.'* One parent from the focus group stated: *'Sometimes we parents are not educated, you know? So those things about education, we don't know, we don't understand.'* According to this response, the parents did not know how they can help or get involved in school activities. They attributed this to their lack of education, such parents failed to play their role or responsibilities regarding involvement in their children's education due to a lack of skill.

However, it was found that most of these parents had an inferiority complex because of their own past education experiences. As a result they shied away from the school. The capability approach is a framework suited in interpreting the nature of parental involvement in the research school community. Nusbaum and Sen (2003:35) argue that the capability approach is a framework used in assessing human well-being. They further state that it focuses on promoting an individual's well-being as well as developing such an individual's overall goals by providing the opportunities or freedom to achieve such goals. Since an individual parent's objective will basically include his/her well-being amongst other achievements, the inability of

some parents to achieve their well-being objectives may result in frustration or feelings of inferiority.

For parents, education will basically be a means of increasing their capability/well-being to achieve their own objectives in life. In the context of the educational level of parents, well-being should imply functioning that is of relevance to well-being, such as being respected by others, being happy, the ability to participate in the society at large and the ability to appear in public without shame. Hence, it can be argued that a lack of quality parental education reduces parental capability in terms of parents' well-being. Therefore, in order for parents to participate in their children's education, the educational levels of these parents should be responsible for that. However, the interviewed parents believed that the school could help them through the provision of educational support.

4.3.3 NEGATIVE TEACHER ATTITUDES

A negative teacher attitude was reported as one of the barrier factors to meaningful parental involvement (teachers N=3 or 50% and parents N=2 or 66). The observation findings revealed that there was this attitude of snobbery and exclusion from teachers. Parents and teachers have different perceptions about each other which leads to conflict between them and results in poor parental involvement. Garry & Rayleen (2011) found that teachers perceived parents with low levels of education as people who have nothing to offer, and so ignore them. One of the interviewed teachers stated, *'There are parents who are illiterates; who don't have anything to offer... They cannot help in homework... So, what we do is that we keep the homework here at school the learners stay here and do it rather than taking it home.'* The report revealed that teachers intentionally refused to communicate with parents regarding the academic progress of the learners. They only communicate with them when there is a behavioural issue to settle. Such poor teacher behaviour towards the parents deprived parents of the opportunity to share or communicate ideas regarding their various home experiences as this concerns their children's education. This in turn frustrates the parents.

Additionally, the majority of parents from the focus-group interview expressed their frustration with teachers. As one parent put it, *'How can we know how to assist our children when the teachers don't care...? They just promote our children from Grade 1 to Grade 7, you are supposed to tell me the area my child is doing well and the area she is not doing well... But you just promote, promote, promote.'* Sen (1999), argues that 'the exercise of freedom is mediated by values, but the values in turn are influence by public discussion and social

interactions, which are themselves influenced by participatory freedoms' (p.4). Hence, if teachers do not offer parents the opportunity to discuss the progress of their children, their freedom or opportunity may be destroyed. The findings reveal that parents felt unwelcome due to teacher interaction and attitudes which force them to stay away from the school. The researcher also found that many parents did not get involved because of their limited education and the ideology that teachers were the professionals and were meant to handle anything pertaining to the education of their children. The respondents also reported a lack of communication between parents and teachers as a barrier factor to parental involvement.

4.3.4 LACK OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Many respondents reported that a lack of effective communication channels between parents and teachers hindered parental involvement (teachers N=3 or 50% and parents N=3 or 100%). Parents from the focus-group interview, while responding to the question about perceived barriers to parental involvement, revealed that there is a lack of effective communication channels between parents and teachers which interferes with their involvement. A typical view from one parent was: *'We have weak communication channel between us (the parents) and the teachers... They only invite us to the school when there are discipline issues with our children.'* Garry & Rayleen (2011) report that there might be a problem of parental involvement if schools only call the parents when there are behavioural issues by the students. In support of this findings, Watson et al. (2012) and Garry & Rayleen (2011) included school-imposed barrier to parental involvement such as the school not having to contact parents until a problem arises. From the observation, the findings also revealed a case of one student who stabbed another in a fight which resulted in summoning the parents of these learners. Yet one of the parents did not turn up.

Regarding poor communication between parents and teachers, a teacher stated in the interview that *'Some teachers are very harsh... Because of some of the parents' poor education background, they do not present themselves the way that some parents can be able to approach them... I think there are teachers who are not approachable and when they are not approachable, the parents cannot communicate with them.'* This quote implies that the communication gap between teachers and parents poses a major barrier to parental involvement which was also identified in the distributed teachers' questionnaires. Sen (1999) refers to any restriction to human functioning as unfreedoms. In this regard, the communication gap between parents and teachers restricted their freedom to participate in the education of their children.

Functioning in the life of an individual parent should include the ability to participate in their children's education or even the freedom to lead the kind of life they value.

On the other hand, the school's climatic condition did not nurture the retention of parental involvement. This is specifically due to the teachers' lack of exposure to training in parental involvement. Hill & Chao (2009:199) highlight the importance of exposing teachers to parental involvement programmes in order to enhance a teacher/parent relationship at schools. Schools should create effective means of communication between parents and teachers. Sen's capability approach argues that developing an effective communication channel between parents and teachers can improve parents' capability by keeping them informed of necessary things and on the progress of their children, including other school programmes.

4.3.5 TIME AS A FACTOR

The majority of the respondents perceived the time factor as one of the barriers to meaningful parental involvement (teachers N=6 or 100 and parents N=3 or 100). Most parents cited time as perceived barriers to meaningful parental involvement. Parents felt they don't have enough time to supervise their children's homework. As put by one interviewed parent: *'One of greatest barrier is time constrain... Some of us parents work long hours and late shift and so when we get home, we are very tired. We cannot check the children's book or attend the school events because we don't have enough time.'* The findings were also supported by Watson et al. (2012) who reported that poor working-class parents had less time to participate in their children's education because they lacked time. Teachers, on the other hand, perceived some factors such as a lack of transport, poverty and time factors as the reasons why they have less parental involvement in their school. For example, one teacher (Ms B) mentioned, *'The major reasons we have less parental involvement here is because most parents work from six to six, they are not financially stable and they don't own their own transportation, so they cannot afford time for parental involvement'*. From the findings, it appears that working parents are not involved in their children's education due to work commitments, a lack of transportation in order to travel to the school, and a lack of time which proved to be a problem to parental involvement. All these factors affected parental involvement in the school community.

4.3.6 UNEMPLOYMENT

The participants perceived unemployment as one of the major causes of a lack of parental involvement (teacher N=2 or 33% and parents N=3 or 100%). One parent said: *'I don't have a job; I find it tough to support the three of them (my children) in their schooling'*. Another parent

from the interviews expressed, *'I am unemployed, and I sell fruits there by the mall in order to make ends meet... It's so difficult to be involved in the children's education because of the needed resources'*. This implies that unemployment and poverty contributed to low levels of parental involvement. The findings observed that some of the parents alternated between selling fruit and vegetables so as to deal with the issue of unemployment. Similarly, one teacher cited unemployment as one of the reasons for a lack of parental involvement in the school community. He expressed, *'Due to the high rate of unemployment in this location, you find learners who don't have shoes, uniforms, books or stationery... some of them are at school because they know that they gonna get at least morning breakfast and afternoon lunch here at school.'* Some parents from the focus-group interviews indicated that they worked as domestic workers far in the Suburbs in order to deal with the problem of unemployment. This interferes with meaningful parental involvement. However, the United States Department of Education (1994) emphasizes the importance of parental involvement by identifying family variables such as income, education level, and work status as some of the determinants of effective parental involvement.

The result (participants) also revealed that unemployed parents struggle to provide for their children. This is because most of the parents prioritized their own needs (life matters) in favour of parental involvement. Another teacher mentioned: *'If you look around you could see the learners without appropriate uniforms or jersey even in this cold weather... This is probably because they are from homes where the adults are unemployed and poor without adequate resources to be involved in the children's education... their parents or whoever is taking care of them is probably more concerned in meeting their very own needs'*.

Unemployed parents with a lack of resources concentrate on meeting their own needs first, such as food, shelter and clothing, before they consider getting involved in their children's schooling (Comer, 2000:155). Individual parents' capabilities, according to Sen (1999), are the mixture of things an individual parent values doing or what he or she wants to be and that ability to be able to do those things. This is reflected in overlooking parental involvement in favour of an individual parent's pressing needs such as food, shelter and clothes. On the other hand, unemployment or poverty can also be seen as a deprivation of the parents' capabilities. Hence, deprivation or poverty happens as a result of parents' unemployment status which therefore hinders what a parent can do. Sen refers to this as functionings. Thus, this is reflected in the life of a parent in which unemployment has deprived him/her of the ability to become involved in the education of his/her children.

4.3.7 LACK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT TRAINING FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

The study findings indicated that parents and teachers cited a lack of parental involvement training for both parties as a barrier factor to meaningful parental involvement (teachers N=2 or 33% and parents N=2 or 66%). Teachers noted their position with little or no exposure to parental involvement training, as complained by one teacher: *'You see, during my training as a teacher, I have never been introduced to a programme on parental involvement just like other staff here, and you find out that most educators do things based on experience... Some of us do not know how to handle issues with parents, that's why some educators often disagree with the parents.'* From this response, one could argue that teachers' lack of training or knowledge regarding parental involvement plays a role in the problem of meaningful parental involvement. Most teachers wrote in the open-ended questionnaires that they have not pass through parental involvement training. Another teacher expressed his view, saying: *'Without a clear school policy or training of teachers on how to involve parents, there will obviously be some kind of uncertainty.'* The literature that is in line with this response is by Bagarette (2011) who affirms that many teachers as well as school heads do not know the responsibilities and functions of parents in school; this has resulted in a lack of parental involvement.

On the other hand, Watson et al. (2012) asserts that teachers assume more responsibilities from the parents' side which often becomes a barrier to meaningful parental involvement. If teachers have been trained in the area of parental involvement, more parents would have become involved. Walker et al. (2010) found that parents' perception regarding their role, ability, invitation from the school, and teacher attitude, will determine the level of parental involvement at school. The findings indicated that most teachers do not know how to integrate with parents because they have never been trained in the area of parental involvement. A typical example is by one parent who expressed: *'We need to know about the activities happening in and out of the school so that we can know how to assist.'* It is of concern, in the view of one teacher who stated: *'The Department should be the right body to get parents involved.'* Such a view is evidence that the school must initiate training programmes in the area of how to involve the parents and staff members, or develop a written policy about home/school collaboration. If the goal of the school is to increase the level of parental involvement, then they need to improve the teachers' knowledge in the area of parental involvement training.

It was further revealed that most parents were not involved in the education of their children. The study confirmed that poor parental knowledge on parental involvement hinders parental

involvement. Obviously this is the reason why Hill & Chao (2009:199) suggests that to enhance the academic performance of learners from low-income communities, it is crucial to introduce their parents to basic initiative requirements that focus on parental involvement. In the words of one parent, *'We (the parents) do not know how the school system works but if they teach us, we can become involved.'* This implies that most of the parents are not familiar with the activities associated with parental involvement. Some parents believe that they can help. However, they indicated that they will need guidance to be able to become involved in their children's education. One teacher also expressed: *'I feel one of the reasons we have less parental involvement is because the parents are not knowledgeable enough.'* This becomes a roadblock to parental involvement because of parents' lack of training on how to get involved in their children's education.

Nussbaum & Sen (2003:31) suggest that the capability approach refers to the effective opportunities an individual parent has in order to do what he or she wants to do. Functioning, on the other hand, refers to a mixture of those beings and doings or achievements of an individual parent. It was found that every parents' values being involved in or supporting the education of their children, which is what Sen refers to as functioning. But parents also require training in order to fully participate in the education of their children, which Sen refers to as capability. In the absence of training on how to become involved in their children's education, it implies that their capability has been minimized. This reflects in the findings which revealed that parents fail to be involved in the education of their children due to lack of training or opportunity. Hence, it is obvious that parents' capability has been restricted in the form of a lack of training on how to become involved in their children's education. Also, the inability of the two parties to work together minimizes the parent's capabilities to be involved in the education of their children.

4.3.8 ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS

The participants mentioned environmental barriers as one of the factors that hinder effective parental involvement (teachers N=3 or 50% and parents N=2 or 66%). A parent explained: *'You can hear that music sound... People are always partying in this neighbourhood like it is nobody's business... It's always like that. You can't have your quiet time. The children can't learn at home... We don't have library facilities around here. You have to walk a long distance and it is not safe because the criminals are there by the road paths.'* This implies that learners suffer due to circumstances surrounding their home environment. Some parents might want to be involved in their children's learning at home but the conditions at home restrict such

involvement. The observation findings indicated that some of the parents live in compacted shack buildings (informal dwelling places) with a lack of ventilation or space where learning can take its place. One interviewed parent is sick and he expressed: *'I'm down with poor health condition, even my wife is suffering from flu and we can't access the public hospital because of the distance from here. So, we resorted to the use of traditional herbs...I am not able to check my children's book because of my condition.'* The researcher can observe the children (learners) preparing the fruit and vegetables to begin to go and sell as requested by their mother so that they would not perish. The environment in which these parents live prohibits any form of parental involvement.

The observed findings revealed that parents from low-income school communities are socially excluded from social-support services that could enhance their capability in order to actively participate in their children's education. In response to perceived barriers to parental involvement, a teacher said, *'some of the parents from the informal settlement like we have here (she pointed to the residing area) will come back home from work late and they are not educated enough... They cannot send their children to the next door neighbour who might be knowledgeable enough to help their children because it's dangerous in this place at night and, again, they don't even have access to the library because the library is located in the distance far from here.'* It is clear from the findings that parents' capability is affected because of a lack facilities and a suitable environment that can support parental involvement. A better living environment and facilities will improve parental involvement. Sen includes environmental factors such as suitable living condition and social facilities as conversion factors that contribute to human functioning (Robeyns, 2005). Hence, it is expected that an improved environment of these parents will contribute to active parental involvement, which is referred to by Sen as functioning. The environment either impacts negatively or positively on people's functioning but, in the case of these parents, the environment hinders their capability to be involved in the education of their children.

4.4 PERCIEVED STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The table below shows both groups of participants' suggested strategies to enhance parental involvement in the context of the school (emerged themes). Certainly, most of these parents have experienced difficulties in terms of getting involved in the schooling of their children and so, the participants suggested strategies like workshop training, improved communication channel, school policy and so forth as strategies to enhance parental involvement.

Table 4.3: Strategies to enhance parental involvement

The table below shows participant’s perceived strategies to enhance parental involvement.

Perceived strategies to enhance parental involvement	Frequency		%	
	N=6 Teachers	N=3 parents	Teachers	parents
Workshop training for parents	4	3	66	100
Introducing teachers to parental involvement training	4	0	66	0
Introducing school policy on parental involvement	2	0	33	0
Improving the communication gap between parents and teachers	5	3	83	100
Introducing parent/teacher meetings	3	1	50	33



4.4.1 WORKSHOP TRAINING FOR PARENTS

Workshop training for parents was perceived by both group of participants as a strategy to enhance parental involvement (teacher N=4 or 66% and parents N=3 or 100%). The participant teachers actually believed that parents’ ignorant behaviour towards parental involvement contributes to a lack of meaningful parental involvement in their school. Some teachers also felt that parents’ disregard of parental involvement is one of the key challenges to parental involvement. This thought was in accordance with responses such as: *‘The kind of parents we have here don’t know how or ways to be involved in their children’s education... They can’t help in any way.’* Another teacher expressed the following: *‘Some parents here are very ignorant in terms of parental involvement... I think... I think the Department need to use workshop training strategy to show the parents the importance of parental involvement.’* For teachers, the blame for a lack of effective parental involvement is on the parents as also revealed by the teachers’ questionnaires. Such blame is unfair, given that the participant

teachers in this study acknowledged that they themselves lack knowledge on parental involvement. This means that they have never been introduced to the area of parental involvement, which is also a hindrance to meaningful parental involvement.

On the other hand, the findings from table 4.3 revealed that parents themselves need to be introduced to a parental involvement workshop to expose them to how to get involved in their children's education. A parent expressed, *'We will like to be involved... but you know... we are not familiar with these things. So, unless we are trained on how to become involved.'* This response pointed to parents' desire to be supported in order to improve their involvement in the education of their children. This is in harmony with the literature by Andrew (2011) who states that every parent has the desire to support their children's learning, has the capacity to be taught and learn and, therefore, require exposure to basic workshop training on parental involvement. In addition, Hills & Chao (2009:199) stress the importance of the use of basic initiative strategies, with the focus on parental involvement to help low-income parents overcome the problem of parental involvement.

Sen's (1999) capability approach is concerned with what individuals are able to do or be, as against what they currently have. Using this approach to analyse people's well-being, the attention should be on the real opportunities an individual has, such as his or her functioning and capability. In the case of an individual parent, functioning includes those things he or she succeeded in doing – such as full participation in their children's education. Capabilities, on the other hand, refer to effective opportunities or a real freedom to attain such functionings. For example, giving parents' or providing them the opportunity or ability to become involved in the education of their children, which will reflect in the form of workshop training for the parents. In this case it is important to use a workshop-initiative strategy in order to enhance parents' capability to be able to become involved in the education of their children. This will grant them the opportunity or freedom to exercise their desire as indicated by the findings. Hence, such workshop training will be significant to parental involvement. Therefore, through the use of a workshop training-strategy, individual parents will be presented with a real opportunity to participate in their children's education, and this will reduce the problem of a lack of parental involvement in low-income school communities.

4.4.2 WORKSHOP TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

The findings reveal that participant teachers have very little knowledge about parental involvement (teachers N=4 or 66% and parents N=0 or 0%). Parents did not respond to this

strategy. This may be because they do not understand that teachers are open to workshop training on parental involvement. The respondent teachers were asked about perceived strategies they thought could be used to enhance parental involvement in their school community. A teacher responded: *'When I did my PGC programme in education, I was not exposed to the area of parental involvement... We only did a course on psychology education. So most times it becomes a problem on how to involve parents.'* The findings revealed that teachers were not prepared in the area of parental involvement. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) suggest that schools provide teachers with in-service training on parental involvement. Hills & Chao (2009:200) concur by advocating that schools must educate their teachers on how to involve parents.

The findings indicate that teachers will be most productive when exposed to the area on how to collaborate with parents. This will actually promote parental involvement. Another teacher said, *'I was never exposed to the area of parental involvement... I think the Department of Education need to make it a part of the curriculum at the teachers training programme so that educators are trained as to how to get parents involved in the education of their children.'* The researcher observed that teachers were struggling to share their views on activities associated to parental involvement. This is because of a lack of training on parental involvement. A teacher wrote in the questionnaire *'We need to be trained in this issue of parental involvement so that we can have a good knowledge about it.'* Moreover, Epstein (1991) argues that teachers' attitude is significant to the level of parental involvement. Therefore, if teachers' attitude is significant to parental involvement, then teachers need to be exposed to parental involvement training in order to increase the level of parental involvement at school. According to Sen (1992), capability enhances people's freedom to lead the kind of life they want in order to achieve functioning. Hence, since teachers' attitude is a determinant factor to parental involvement, developing a strategy such as training teachers will help to promote parents' capability which in turn provides parents with the ability to be able to function. Thus functioning here will reflect in parents' active participation in their children's education. On the other hand, capability, which is in the form of teachers training, will give parents the freedom to exercise that which they desire or value. Lack of teachers training will become an issue to parental involvement. With such a strategy, parents' capability could be developed.

4.4.3 INTRODUCING SCHOOL POLICY ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Teachers (N=2 or 33%) and parents (N=0 or 0%) perceived the need of a school policy as a strategy in order to enhance parental involvement. In the absence of a school policy, there could

be some uncertainty surrounding how schools can involve parents. As put by one teacher (Ms B): *'In the absence of established school policy on parental involvement, one may not know how to involve parents especially those of our school community... It is difficult; the school need to have an established policy on parental involvement so as to encourage parental involvement.'* This respondent is in line with Epstein and Sanders' (2000:289) research which confirms the significance of developing a school policy on a home/school partnership. The findings revealed that low-income community schools do not believe that low-income parents have anything to offer. So the school authorities do not think it necessary in the area of establishing a policy on parental involvement. This, therefore, restricts the opportunity to improve parental involvement in the school.

A parent from the focus-group interview responded by saying, *'Look (we the) parents do not know what to do... maybe the school needs to develop a policy that will help us to get involved.'* This is in support of literature by Comer (2000), Watson et al. (2012) and Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) which suggests that invitations for parental involvement is mainly influenced by the school's welcoming climate, policy on parental involvement, teachers' attitudes towards parents, and parental support. The findings indicated that policy attempt is likely to determine the level of parental involvement at school. Giving parents the opportunity to expand their freedom is what Sen (1999) refers to as development. Thus, schools need to provide the necessary freedom such as a policy on parental involvement in order for parents to actively engage in school activities. For Sen, achievement is to be evaluated based on the necessary freedom an individual parent has. Therefore, the expansion of such freedom in the form of a policy on parental involvement is seen as a substantial means of development. Thus, one could argue that an established school policy could improve parental involvement or freedom.

4.4.4 IMPROVING THE COMMUNICATION GAP BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS

The majority of the participants (teachers N=5 of 83% and parents N=3 or 100%) stressed the importance of effective home/school communication. Although both group of participants believed that the communication channel between parents and the school is weak, the findings revealed restricted communication opportunities between the two parties although some suggestions were made as to how to improve the level of communication between parents and teachers. It emerged from the focus-group interview that teachers did not do enough in calling the parents. They only contact the parents when a problem arises. In the words of one parent, *'They only call us when there is problem...they should learn to call us for good.'* Another

parent mentioned: *'They can call us to deliver information that will help us and our children... We will come... It will help to build a good relationship.'* Comer (2000) affirms this when he suggests that schools should help parents by communicating to them on how to use the right phrases in order to engage with their children during homework or to promote conversation levels.

According to the capability approach, human development is the availability of an effective opportunity to enhance people's freedom. Hence, keeping parents informed through a communication strategy is likely to increase the level of parental involvement at school and, also, increase parent's capability. One of the participant teachers enthused, *'If we can communicate them via either phone call or newsletter to inform them on what they need to do in homework, it could help them... But the issue is that their phone contact is not going through.'* The teachers believed that effective communication, such as informing parents on what to do, can help improve parental involvement. But they also believe that restricted opportunities for effective communication between the two parties do exist. One teacher was however disappointed with the level of communication between homes and school but suggested that the situation can be improved. *'We can improve the communication channel between us and the parents by informing them how important their involvement is regarding their children's education... We can communicate to them how to get involved.'* Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) confirm that one way of dealing with the communication barrier is through emphasizing the need for family/school partnerships. Therefore, clearly articulating the school goals through communication would likely increase the parents' ability to become involved in the education of their children.

4.4.5 INTRODUCTION OF PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS

The table above revealed that participants regard parent/teacher meetings as one strategy that could be used to promote the level of parental involvement in the school community (teachers N=3 or 50% and parent N=1 or 33%). The findings indicated that a parent/teacher meeting is a forum used by the school to improve parent/teacher partnerships in the past, which unfortunately is no longer effective. A teacher reported: *'In the past we used to have these parent/teacher meetings where we try to present those things we teach the children in class so that we can discuss it in meeting with parents.'* Another teacher said, *'There was a period we had the parent/teacher forum at school; if we can go back to those days that will definitely improve our relationship with parents.'* The observation findings revealed that such meetings were mainly held to discuss problems which are no longer effective because parents stay away

in order to avoid embarrassment caused by the teachers. As mentioned by one parent, *'We used to come to parent/teacher meetings but they set up the meetings just to discuss problems.'*

However, teachers perceived this method of contacting or communicating with the parents differently as mentioned by one teacher: *'If we re-introduce parent/teacher meeting...we can use the platform to discuss curriculum, exam performances and how we can assist the parents... I do believe this could yield fruits.'* Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009:57) assert that schools should use parent/teacher conferences to discuss specific information about the learners and, by doing so, improve the level of parental involvement at school. Furthermore, it was observed that teachers often invite parents of children with issues, like behavioural problems. However, parents and teachers' views on a parent/teacher meeting revealed that such a strategy was the primary means of contact between the parents and teachers in a school. Moreover, parent/teacher meetings provide parents with the opportunity to have one-on-one interaction with teachers, thereby providing a solution to improve parental involvement. The school document also revealed that it has been a while since they had a parent teacher meeting at the school other than the emergency meetings.

4.5 PROGRAMMES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The table below depicts projects or programmes that could be used to improve the level of parental involvement in the school community (emerged themes). Considerate, those programmes such as the ones suggested in the table below could be used to mediate parental involvement in low-income school communities. These programmes include; provision of employment for parents, feeding scheme, basic infrastructures, and education workshop for parents and provision of government grant.

Table 4.4: Programmes to improve parental involvement

The table below shows participants' suggested programmes to improve parental involvement.

Programmes to promote parental involvement	Frequency		%	
	N=6 Teachers	N=3 Parents	Teachers	Parents
Provision of employment for parents	3	2	50	66

Feeding scheme	4	2	66	66
Basic infrastructures	3	2	50	66
Education workshop for parents	6	3	100	100
Provision of government grant support	5	2	83	66

4.5.1 PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT FOR PARENTS

Table 4.4 shows that teachers (N=3 or 50%) and parents (N=2 or 66%) who were participants recommended that government should provide job opportunities for parents in order to help parents get more income. With this income, parents will provide their children with the necessary learning materials. In the words of one parent from the focus-group interview, *'We are poor, we are unemployed... The government can come to our rescue by providing us with job opportunities so that we can support our children's schooling'*. Financial constraints were considered as one of the major barriers to parental involvement. Teachers see unemployment as one factor that contributed to the problem of parental involvement and they also suggested that creating job opportunities could be used as an avenue to empower parents. This reflects in the exact words of one teacher who expressed, *'If there are provisions of jobs for the parents, it will empower them to be able to get involved in their children's education.'* The increasing level of unemployment in this community was seen as the reason for the high rate of poverty which did not help parental involvement.

The observation findings revealed that some parents ventured into small business such as selling of fruits and vegetables in order to escape poverty. The participants made various suggestions on how to improve parental involvement, such as initiating a school gardening programme with the aim of employing more parents to work as school gardeners. They believed that such an initiative programme could be used to support parents to be involved in the education of their children. A parent suggested that: *'We want the government to establish kitchen projects initiatives at the school so that they can employ more parents and make parents to get closer to the school at all times.'* This response was in line with Vuyisile (2012) who noted that there is a positive relationship between home and school partnerships.

Moreover, the United States Department of education (1996) identified parents' work status as a crucial determinant factor of effective parental involvement. Sen's capability approach provides a lens for understanding peoples' well-being and the relationship between development and functioning. Hence, development in this context would involve policies or programmes/projects that can be used to facilitate human functioning such as the involvement of parents in their children's education. Therefore, the provision of jobs could be used to develop parents' capabilities or parental involvement. This is because the creation of job opportunities will provide parents with more income and reduce the impact of poverty on parental involvement. Such programme initiatives will promote individual parent's development especially the parents in this research community. Where there are opportunities, adequate welfare or provision of jobs to ensure that individual parents' needs are met, is what Sen (1999) perceives to be development or opportunity to break free from poverty.

4.5.2 FEEDING SCHEME PROGRAMME INITIATIVES

The responses (teacher N= 4 or 66% and parents N= 2 or 66%) suggest that feeding scheme programme initiatives could be used to support poor parents. The findings revealed that most parents were not involved in the education of their children due to the bad influence of poverty on parental involvement. Parents were also unable to support their children and they avoided coming in contact with the teachers thinking they will be embarrassed at school. Moreover, poor parents struggle to provide three-square meals for their family. This did not go down well with the children's performance. Daniel-Ogenetega (2010) found that children with a poor family background suffer malnutrition which in turn affects their academic outcomes. A teacher explained, *'Most of the parents are poor, they struggle to provide food for their family but, you can see today, we have feeding scheme in the school which at least can support the parents.'* The research revealed that a lack of income or resources can have a negative impact on the level of consumption and well-being of a family.

A parent from the focus-group interview responded: *'Maybe the government can provide food and uniform for our children because most of us are living in poverty and there are no jobs.'* These findings indicated how important nutrition is to low-income parents. Such a programme initiative will reduce the stress on the side of the parents. Another teacher perceived that *'Most parents will not send their children to school if there is no such programme, like school feeding scheme.'*

The researcher can observe the excitement in the faces of the learners who enjoyed a free feeding scheme at the school. They were fed twice each school day. The findings indicated that the cost of household consumption deprived parents of their involvement in the education of their children. Such intervention programme is a crucial factor in reducing the impact of poverty on parental involvement. Comer (2000) found that affluent families are more likely to provide nutrition and education security for their children. The findings suggest that poor parents will need sufficient support to be able to provide their family with feeding and other necessary needs. Nusbaum and Sen (2003) are more focused on the development theory such as the development of a policy to facilitate individual parents' well-being or development. Sen argues that the development policy could be used to enhance people's capabilities to achieve doings and beings. Moreover, Sen argues that the sole focus of public policy programmes should aim at improving parents' capability to be able to achieve valuable doings and beings. Such valuable doings and beings include the ability to provide nutrition for their family.

In relation to hunger and a feeding scheme programme, the capability approach is used in evaluating various means to overcome unfreedom or failures. Hence, the chief goal of capability approach is to avoid poverty or critical malnutrition. In that case, this reflects on how initiating such a programme could be used to promote parents' capability or reduce the impact of poverty on parental involvement.

4.5.3 PROVISION OF BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE TO IMPROVE LIVES AND EDUCATION

The respondents believed that the provision of basic infrastructure could be used to address the problem of parental involvement in the context of their school (teacher N= 3 or 50% and parents N2 or 66%). A teacher responded to the question on perceived programmes to enhance parental involvement by explaining, *'There used to be some psychological experts who came here and counselled some of these parents who are facing poverty challenges in their daily lives, but they have not been here for long time now.'* This implies that poor parents suffer from stressors which limit their participation in the education of their children. Another teacher mentioned that *'There are inadequate public infrastructures in this location... The general hospital or even library facilities are located outside this location so I think these are the areas we are lacking.'* Scott, in Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), confirmed that schools can use medical programme such as medical treatment to help parents or their children who are in need of health services.

The researcher found there is an existing relationship between basic infrastructure and parental involvement, as was expressed by one parent: *'I'm suffering from this serious coughing... the environment where I live with my family does not support my condition. The public hospital is far from here... We don't even have a library facility around us here... With my condition I can't help my children with their schooling.'* Another parent from the focus group interview lamented: *'To even walk a path to where they have public hospital you are endangering your life because of armed robbers who usually hang around the lonely path... we need government to bring accessible public hospital to us'*. The findings revealed that poverty, lack of supportive environment and the health condition of parents contributed to the lack of meaningful parental involvement in their children's education. Daniel-Ogenetega (2010) found that parents living in a poor neighbourhood struggle to get involved in their children's education. Concerning parents' health condition, it was confirmed by Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), that parental involvement diminishes especially in deprived families or homes where the family head is suffering from health challenges.

Moreover, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) assert that parents from deprived communities are not only likely to be poor in terms of resources; they are also faced with very little opportunity to succeed in life. This is due to limited opportunities such families have. The neighbourhood where the learners come from did not support parental involvement. This contributed to limited parental involvement in the school community. The findings revealed that most parents in this research will require effective intervention projects or programmes to support the functioning of these parents in their children's education. The capability approach by Sen (1992) is mainly concerned in facilitating parents' freedom to live the kind of life they want. Nussbaum & Sen (2003) conceptualize poverty as the deprivation of basic needs an individual parent requires to be able to function, for example, good housing, health and education facilities. Sen suggests that the provision of such facilities will strongly reduce the impact of poverty on parental involvement. Therefore, provision of basic infrastructure could be used to mediate parental involvement due to the fact that it will give parents the platform to effectively become involved in their children's education. A combination of poverty, insufficient infrastructure, poor education, low-income, unemployment, high crime environment or poor health condition will surely need improved policy programme to counter such problems. Failure to provide basic infrastructure like the ones mentioned by the participants may result to unfreedom(s) or lack of meaningful parental involvement.

4.5.4 EDUCATION WORKSHOP PROGRAMME FOR PARENTS

The findings revealed that parental education is relevant to meaningful parental involvement (teachers N=6 or 100% and parents N=3 or 100%). A majority of the participants felt that parental education could be used to improve the level of parental involvement in the school. As mentioned by one teacher, *'Most of the parents that we deal with here are not educated they can only improve through workshop programme on how to involve parents'*. Most parents do not get involved in their children's education because of poor parental education. Meanwhile, most participants suggested that to improve parental involvement, there is a need to design educational workshop programme for parents. However, parents from the focus-group interview attributed their lack of parental involvement to the past government regime. As one parent put it: *'In the past we did not have better education because of apartheid but here we are... We can still learn because we want our children to succeed where we did not.'* This revealed that attending school is highly valued by the parents. Also, parents still have the desire to take part in their children's education. The Department of Education (1995), also confirmed that even though the government encourages parental involvement, the legacy of apartheid still lingers around former disadvantaged (low-income) school communities.

In addition, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) conclude that poverty poses a great barrier to parental involvement which also include personal problem such as poor parental education which in turn results in low parental self-esteem. The research findings revealed that parental competence has a relationship with parental education. Most of the parents are uneducated parents and so they could not be involved in their children's education. Another teacher reported that *'Most parents we have here are illiterates. It is important to get them trained so that they can see the need to be involved in the education of their children.'* Education workshop training for parents is seen as an effective method employed to improve parental involvement as well as to impact skills on the side of the parents. This in turn will increase the confidence of parents and empower them to become involved in their children's education.

Research continues to link education to income as well as increased parental involvement. Adams & Waghid (2005) and the United States Department for Education (1996) asserts that poor parental education leads to poor economic conditions which in turn results in low parental involvement. On the other hand, Comer (2000) asserts that educated parents are more likely to secure their income and effectively become involved in their children's education compared to poorly educated parents. However, materially deprived parents may be more deprived in the absence of supportive skills to empower them to become involved in their children's education.

Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), suggests that effective intervention programmes include those that can be used to improve parental skills and address other parental problems. Sen (1992), argues that the development process should involve the expansion of individual or group freedoms that are most required of such concerned people to enable them to achieve valuable doings and beings. Beings and doings here refer to meaningful parental involvement. There is a need to address the poor education levels of these parents. Thus, educational workshop programme will significantly impact on parents' capability and grant them the opportunity to become involved in the education of their children.

Sen sees development as a practical policy that is used to enhance individual's freedom to be able to live a life of fulfilment. Therefore, one can say that education training programmes could be used to equip parents with skills that will empower them to do that which they value, such as participating in their children's education. In addition, the findings revealed that most parents will need urgent supportive programmes to be able to get involved in the education of their children. Supportive workshop training contributes significantly to parental involvement. However, if there is no workshop training programme for the parents, their capability will suffer. The ability of the school or the relevant authorities to provide training workshops for parents will elicit their interest in improving parental involvement and facilitate parental development as well. Sen suggests that workshop training for parents is significant to human development.

4.5.5 GOVERNMENT GRANT SUPPORT

The majority of the participants (teachers N=5 or 83% and parents N=2 or 66%) believed that government social grants support could be used to improve the lives of parents in the school community. In the words of one teacher, *'Most parents here are poor and cannot keep up with family demands. So, government can use social grant to support them. That way, they can come forward and take part in the education of their children.'* Such social support will help to provide finances for the parents and enable them to support the learners materially. Also, the questionnaire findings revealed that planning on using social grant could improve parental involvement. Meanwhile, parents believe that with the availability of social grants, they will have no problems to become involved in the education of their children. As expressed by one parent, *'When a mixture of social beneficiary mechanisms come together to support us poor parents under harsh conditions, then you will not be surprise to see some of us participating in the school governance bodies.'* Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), found that social-grant support benefits parents living in poverty. They further revealed that the research school where

they conducted their study developed social mechanisms in order to help parents from a deprived community and such a social support mechanism was a success in terms of improving parental involvement. The findings in this study revealed that poor parents are less likely to be involved in the education of their children due to their daily struggle with life as well as a lack of supportive social grants.

Another teacher explained, *'Access to social grant especially for poor single mothers is most likely to benefit them and encourage them to get involved in their children's education.'* Some parents mentioned provision of social services such as government grant, more income, more education, conducive environment and better social facilities. They (parents) believe that social support from the relevant authorities can address their needs and allow them the opportunity to effectively participate in the education of their children. The findings revealed that socio-economic-deprived parents responded negatively in terms of parental involvement. In addition, the researcher observed the neglect of learners from poor homes. The children come to school in torn school uniforms and broken shoes. This is as a result of poverty. There is evidence that a lack of social support programmes deprives South African parents of their responsibility to participate in their children's education (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). However, some teachers blamed parents for this lack of involvement. Such blame could be harsh on parents, as the research findings have revealed the manifestation of poverty on these parents. To improve parental involvement in these areas, it is crucial to create programmes to support parents.

Social support mechanisms such as government grants are what Sen (1999), refers to as social development, and which can be used to ensure that each parent/society benefits to enable them to function or achieve individual goals such as the ability to be involved in their children's education. In addressing these issues of development, one must look at the underdeveloped areas. According to Alkire (2008), the capability approach considers underdevelopment to be a lack of capabilities such as deprivation and not just a lack of income or finances. The capability approach focuses mainly on enhancing people's development. Therefore any sort of under-development would mean capability deprivation. Hence, any individual parent with deprived capability could be seen as under-developed.

This approach focuses on enhancing under-development or individuals with deprived capabilities or functioning(s). The framework is used in evaluating people's capabilities in order to enhance their freedoms to be able to participate in what they want, such as that of these parents. Lack of social support such as grants has deprived parents of participating in the

education of their children. In this regard, the provision of government grants will develop the under-developed area for the parents. Such under-developed area could be seen as deprived capabilities or a lack of government grants to be able to provide reading material for the children. With the availability of a grant, parents can develop in terms of parental involvement. Therefore, one can argue that the provision of social grants will enhance parents' capabilities as well as improve parental involvement. Furthermore, Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), confirms that such programmes are likely to have an impact on individual parents.

4.5.6 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion one can argue that teachers' understanding with regard to parental involvement mostly has to do with school centric. Therefore, it is mainly about what the teachers want the parents to do. They, however, pointed to poverty factors as chief barriers to parental involvement and suggested ways in which the problems can be addressed. As a result of these poverty factors, parents' capabilities to function were affected. Moreover, the capability approach was used in analyzing the suggested strategies and programmes to promote parental involvement. Therefore, improved capability or parental involvement could be achieved through the provision of significant support in the context of the research location.

The next chapter will draw conclusion and also recommendations based on the findings.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter conclusion will be discussed based on the findings with regard to the aim and objectives of the study. The main aim of the study is to establish teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in low-income school communities (a case). The objectives are as follows:

- To understand teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the context of the school.
- To investigate barriers facing parental involvement in the school community.
- To explore strategies to promote parental involvement in the school community.
- To identify programmes that can be used to enhance parental involvement in the school community.

The chapter will further draw conclusion based on the literature review; it discusses the impact of poverty factors on the parents' capabilities as well as its implications on parental involvement. The chapter explains further poverty factors which contributed to low levels of parental involvement in low-income school communities. The chapter explains these poverty factors using capability-approach perspectives. Also, the chapter advances with the implication of these poverty factors on parental involvement, including the suggested ways to improve parental involvement (strategies and programmes) in the context of this research site. Since the research was carried out using a qualitative research design, the conclusion also discusses the method used. The recommendations were made based on conclusions from the findings.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This research explores teachers' perceptions of parental involvement as well as barrier/remedy factors to parental involvement. **The research findings revealed that teachers have a limited understanding of parental involvement.** This was also revealed in a South African study by Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009), which found that teachers share different views on parental involvement. This means that the term 'parental involvement' is a complex phenomenon. **The study found that there is lack of meaningful parental involvement in the research**

community. This is as a result of lack of resources by the parents which in turn restricts parents from participating in the education of their children. However, this was also found in the literature review of low-income school communities in other parts of the world (Watson et al., 2012).

Parental involvement is a complex phenomenon that is based on a specific school setting. The literature review by (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009), indicates that parental involvement is low, especially in low-income school communities, as a result of various poverty factors. Both teachers and parents recognized various factors that either influence parental involvement negatively or positively. **The chief road block to parental involvement was identified by both participant groups as poverty including other poverty factors such as a lack of parental education, a lack of supportive environment and so forth.** Poverty caused the parents not to be involved in their children's education. They avoided the school environment because they felt that they will be embarrassed when they pitch up at school for not supporting the education of their children. Judging from the findings, parental involvement can be increased when teachers, schools, government or policy developers make or employ significant programmes to support the parents. Moreover, the findings revealed the importance of school policy guideline on parental involvement.

There is a lack of a supportive school climate to support parental involvement in the school. For example, the school did not establish a policy on parental involvement. Teachers also perceived parents as negligent with regard to parental involvement. However, parents indicated that they desire to participate in the education of their children but lack the skills and capacity to do so. Moreover, there is a lack of sufficient interaction between parents and teachers. One of the causes of these is the lack of adequate communication between homes and school. Judging from the findings, teachers mostly tend to contact parents when there are problems. Such contact most times is seen as a barrier to parental involvement, even when the school means well (Garry & Rayleen, 2011). **However, the participants suggested effective means to improve the poor communication gap that exists between parents and teachers, such as informing parents on how they can help their children when they are learning at home and informing them on learner progress report.**

In addition, the poor levels of parents' education left most parents feeling incapacitated regarding their children's learning. Some parents felt they lacked the knowledge to help their

children. Therefore, they were not involved. **Also, unemployment, time factors, negative teacher attitudes, a lack of social grants or a supportive environment caused the problem of low parental involvement in the school.** Consequently the implication of these barrier factors reflects in the unfreedoms of these parents' capabilities to participate in their children's education (Sen, 1993). The research revealed the intersection between poverty, capabilities and parental involvement in their children's education. Those factors affect parents' capabilities and denied them the opportunities or freedoms to become involved in the education of their children. Capabilities refer to real opportunities; each individual parent has to be able to attain functionings such as the ability to participate in their children's education. Clearly, from the findings, parents did not have those freedoms or opportunities to enable them to take part in the education of their children so this resulted in a lack of parental involvement in the school community.

However, the research findings identified ways or programmes to improve the capabilities and functionings of these parents as well as parental involvement. **The school feeding-scheme programme according to the participant teachers is one of the major reasons why parents send their children to school.** Therefore, lifting the impact of poverty from poor families, who cannot provide adequate meals for their homes, would help. **The entire participant teachers indicated that they were not prepared with regard to parental involvement. And so, they made suggestion for a training workshop that will focus on the area of parental involvement for both participant groups.** Lack of training resulted in poor teacher/parent collaboration. Schools need to develop in-service teacher training programmes on how to work with parents. It is important that schools must train their teachers on how to help the parents (Comer, 2000). **On the other hand, parents felt that they lacked the capacity and skills to help their children. So they were not involved in their children's learning, however, they were willing to help if they can be trained.** A lack of resources and parental confidence resulted in a lack of parental involvement in their children's education. Schools should develop programme initiatives that will improve parents' involvement in their children's education, which in turn will increase the level of parental involvement. Sen (1999) argues that a workshop training programme is significant to human development. This means that a workshop can to a great extent improve parental capabilities as well as involvement.

The findings also revealed that a non-supportive environment or a lack of social-grant support contributed to a lack of parental involvement in low-income school communities in South Africa. Most of these parents are poor and live in an environment that did not support

their children's learning, or even enable them to become involved in the education of the learners. So, because of these factors, they did not get involved in the education of their children. **The participants recommend a government support in the area of provision of grants and basic amenities.** Hence, for a successful or effective intervention, the relevant policy programmes must be implemented in order to empower the parents in an attempt to increase the level of parental involvement in the research community. **The high level of poverty was as a result of unemployment which in turn impacted on parental involvement.** The relevant authorities need to develop policy programmes to address the problems of these parents. Findings indicated that materially deprived parents neglected their children's education because they lacked the income to cater for their children's basic needs. Hence, creating job opportunities for these parents will address the negative effects of poverty on parental involvement. This will help develop parents' capabilities as well as increase the level of parental involvement in low-income school communities in South Africa. Sen (1999), argues that development programmes involved any policy that is targeted at the development of an individual parent's capabilities and functionings. Such development policy will enable individual parents' to actively become involved in the education of their children.

Apart from the use of capability approach to explain the lack of parental involvement in this school community, it was also employed regarding the analysis of suggested ways to improve parental involvement in the context of the research community as well as the recommendations. Therefore, developing human beings or individual parent would involve policy programmes or social services to facilitate parents' capabilities and functionings to achieve meaningful parental involvement.

While there are other methods of collecting data, the qualitative research-design approach used in this study can be described as the interpretative method of enquiry which allowed the researcher to have a depth or rich data analysis. The environment of the research community was seen as a complementary approach to the qualitative research method of enquiry adopted in this research. Hence, this approach enabled the researcher to collect data about the circumstances surrounding the participants and how it influenced parental involvement (Creswell et al., 2007).

DIAGRAM 5.2.1: A DIAGRAM OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL

<p>Teachers’ understanding of parental involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers’ understanding of parental involvement mostly has to do with school centric. It is mainly what the teachers want the parents to do. Michael et al. (2012), in a South African study found that teachers use parents’ volunteers as part of parental involvement, such as the provision or maintenance of school facilities, fixing of learning materials and assisting were help is needed (Comer, 2000). <p>Most of these school-based activities include volunteering, fund-raising and so forth. They exclude various home and community parental involvement activities which defines broader parental involvement (see chapter 2.2).</p>	<p>Barriers to parental involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most mentioned barrier factors include; poverty and lack of parental education. Respondents reported financial constraints and lack of parental education as some of the chief reasons for a lack of parental involvement in the school community. <p>Resources and logistical issues played a negative role with regard to parental capability/involvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> However, unemployment and environmental issues also contributed to a lack of parental involvement in the school community. According to Van Wyk & Lemmer (2009) the lack of supportive environment contributes to low levels of parental involvement in schools. <p>Sen (1999) assert that environment where a person lives can either, negatively or positively affect such person’s capability or parental involvement.</p>
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Strategies to enhance parental involvement	Programmes to promote parental involvement
<p>Most of the perceived strategies to enhance parental involvement are based on an attempt to provide possible solutions to the barriers to parental involvement. Chao (2009), stress the importance of the use of basic initiative strategies with the focus on parental involvement to help low income parents overcome the problems of parental involvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are various ways to try and get parents involved in their children’s education. Some of the strategies as suggested by the participants include workshop training for parents and improved communication channel between families and school just to mention but a few. 	<p>The South African Schools Act (1996) is trying to increase the level of parental involvement at schools; however, it is difficult to achieve this in some school location such as that of this current research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants believed that educational programmes could be used to train both parties and change the perceptions and beliefs of the teachers and also the mentalities of the parents. • Other programmes suggested to improve parental involvement in low-income school communities include provision of employment, basic infrastructures and a government grants such that will develop parents’ capability to enable them to purchase learning materials to support their children schooling.



The diagram above (Diagram 5.2.1) shows the framework of Parental Involvement in the Context of the School Community based on the Findings.

The framework shows parental involvement in the context of the research site, including the barriers and solutions (strategies/programmes to increase parental involvement). The findings revealed teachers’ limited knowledge of parental involvement. Moreover, the findings indicated that poverty is one of the major barrier factors to parental involvement. According to the participants strategic planning, as well as systematic programme initiatives, are effective methods that could be used to address the problem of parental involvement in low-income school communities. Such methods include a training workshop and the provision of an enabling environment or empowerment, and so forth.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of parental involvement cannot be over-emphasized. This section provides recommendations based on the literature review, field work and the qualitative findings from the research in respect of parental involvement in low-income school communities (a case).

- **Teacher training:** The participant teachers and also the parents lack the knowledge of parental involvement. The South African Schools Act (1996) have made an effort to partner both the parents and teachers in order to increase the level of parental involvement at schools yet, the goal of this Act is yet to be achieved in many schools. Even though those teachers are qualified educators, they still lack the preparation they need regarding parental involvement. Therefore, it is recommended that schools should design teacher in-service training in order to train the teachers. According to capability approach, such training will enhance the capabilities or freedoms parents will require in order to fully engage in the education of their children.
- **Government grants and provision of infrastructures:** The field work revealed that the circumstances surrounding parents from the research community could result to non-beneficial lifestyles. This is due to a lack of basic amenities which can sustain people's well-being. Thus, their lives are determined by their safety, health, opportunities, freedoms, infrastructures, well-beings or ability to live a worthy lifestyle. All these factors intersect with parental involvement or capabilities; therefore, they could determine the level of parental involvement. However, there is urgent need to improve the degree of parental involvement in poor school communities such as the research community. Parents from this research community who are referred to as low-income parents were pre-occupied with poverty, low socio-economic status and poor neighbourhoods. They indicated that their active involvement in the education of their children, which they all value, will only be possible if they benefit from various governmental social-grant agencies. Parents from the focus-group interview indicated their desire to participate in their children's education. They also indicated that it will only be possible after their families have benefited from government social-grant support. Hence, provision of government social grant will reduce the impact of poverty on parental involvement. Robeyns and Sen (2003) argue that the capability approach is a theory that focuses on evaluating people's development or well-being, developmental policies or inequality amongst the society as well as poverty. Hence, this approach is a framework that can be used to develop policy programmes as well as assessments of

such. The framework is suitable for a South African context. To salvage the situation facing parents in this community will require effort by the relevant authorities to address the imbalance between different races in both economic, social, political and education aspects.

- **Education workshop for the parents:** The findings revealed that parents desired to get involved in their children's education. But their lack of the required skills and knowledge restricted them from getting involved in their children's learning. Therefore, parents should be provided with some education-workshop programmes. This will, in turn, improve their skills and ability to become involved in the learning of their children. Certainly, such programmes will enhance parents' freedoms to be able to participate in the education of their children. Furthermore, this will increase their confidence to interact with the teachers and learners. Also, teachers indicated that they have never been exposed to parental involvement programmes. Therefore, this will help to build a good collaboration between families and schools. According to Sen (1999), any policy programme that focuses on assisting individual parents could be seen as the development of such parents' capabilities to be able to function in the education of their children. Hence, planning on educational workshop for the parents will enhance parents' capabilities to be able to achieve their goals, such as being able to assist in the learning of their children.
- **School policy on parental involvement:** Research by Epstein (1995), revealed that a developed school policy in respect of parental involvement determines the level of parental involvement at school. However, the findings revealed that the school did not develop or have a school policy regarding parental involvement at the school. One major advantage of developing a school policy on parental involvement is that it sets clear goals and expectations in respect of parental involvement. Planning or developing a policy programme on parental involvement will increase parents' freedom to be able to participate in their children's education both at home and at school. Therefore, it is recommended that schools should develop policy programmes on parental involvement as this will give parents the opportunity to participate in their children's education. It will also be recommended to include parents in school decision-making processes in order to allow them to express their views or ideas.
- **Communication channel between homes and schools:** The findings revealed that there is an existence of unproductive communication between parents and teachers

respectively which hinders parental involvement at the school. Such communication involves informing parents on how to assist or support their children's learning at home. The findings revealed a poor channel of communication between the parents and the teachers. The communication between parents and teachers was always strained because parents are only called upon when there is a problem in terms of the learners. Hence, it is important that teachers must effectively communicate with parents to inform them on how they can become involved in their children's learning at home, or how they can get involved at school. This will help parents to assist in their children's homework as well as increase the level of parental involvement at the schools. Communicating with the parents will empower their ability to interact with the learners. Therefore, effective communication will develop parents' capabilities and functionings to be able to participate in their children's education.

To improve the lives of parents and learners, government should improve its policy on basic infrastructure, especially for poor school communities. For example, parents experienced health difficulties, or a lack of a supportive environment or education facilities. Hence, the study recommends that the relevant authorities should develop health and infrastructure policies in order to address the problems of these parents and the children from poor school communities. Factors such as a lack of resources, a lack of basic infrastructure or social grant support continue to affect the experience of parenting and education of poor families. Hence, it is recommended that the provision of such basic infrastructure will support parental involvement. Sen (1992) highlights the significance of supportive environment in enhancing people's capabilities. Therefore, improved policies on basic infrastructure will increase the capabilities of individual parents to become involved in his or her children's education.

When parents are empowered it will fulfil their dreams and provide an enabling environment for them to become what they want, such as effectively participating in the education of their children without hindrance.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

Learners, who are also an important part of the school stakeholders, were not included as participants in this research, nor even the school head. The purposive sampling method used in this research was fairly small. Due to financial limitations the researcher spent a minimum of four weeks in the research field. Most teachers did not submit their questionnaires due to a busy

work-schedule and including the perceptions of parents regarding parental involvement could reveal more interested information on the differences in perceptions.

Further research may include learner and principal(s) participants as well as a number of school communities so as to gather more fascinating information. Also further research may include parents' perceptions or understanding of parental involvement as well.

5.5 CONCLUSION

One of the major objectives of this research is to establish teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the context of low-income school communities (a case). The establishment of their various perceptions regarding parental involvement is relevant due to the complexities of the phenomenon and the gap between affluent school's parental involvement and low-income school communities. The study reveals that the level of teachers' understanding of parental involvement is limited due to a lack of training in this area.

Moreover, there are visible barriers to parental involvement in the background of this study which causes a lack of parental involvement. For the participants, most of these barriers are as a result of a lack of material resources. However, parents are willing to be involved in the education of their children but were restricted by these barriers.

On the other hand, parents suggest ways in which to fulfil their desires, such as educational programmes, empowerment or the provision of an enabling environment.

The study focused on one primary school community characterized by low-income households. The study concluded that those parents' capabilities, as well as their involvement, could be improved by giving them significant support.

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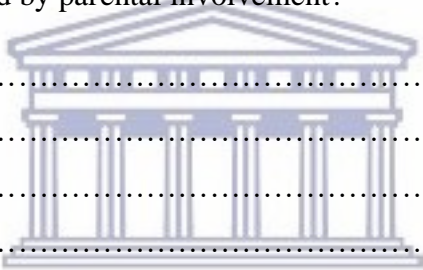
APPENDIX A1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

This questionnaire seeks to establish teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in low-income school communities. The teachers' views on what they view as parental involvement in low-income school communities' including the barriers/remedies to meaningful parental involvement, is under investigation by this study. The questionnaire will help the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the context of low-income school communities.

You are kindly requested to answer the questionnaire willingly, without any compulsion. Your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality in keeping with research ethics. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What do you understand by parental involvement?



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2. How can parents in low-income school communities involve themselves in the education of their children in both home and school environments?

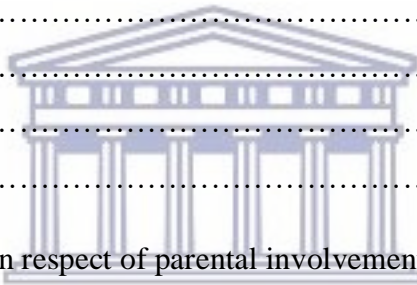
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3. Do you think these parents have the capacity to effectively be involved in the education of their children? Support your answer.

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4. What are your expectations of the parents in respect of becoming involving in the education of their children?

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5. Are your expectations in respect of parental involvement in the education of their children in line with expectations of parents regarding the education of their children?

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6. Do you effectively communicate with parents and tell them what they should do, or do you disregard them?

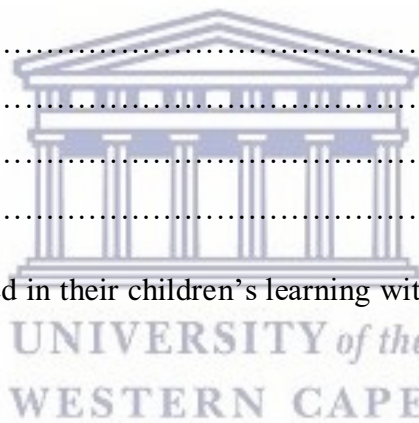
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7. During your training as a teacher, did you take any course on parental involvement?
What would you suggest in this aspect?

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8. What do you think would interfere with effective parental involvement in your job as a teacher?

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9. Can parents be involved in their children's learning without being in the school? And in what way(s)?

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10. Are you satisfied with your school community's parental involvement at home for the learner? If you are not, what could be the barrier to home involvement?

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11. How are parents in your school involved in the education of their children at school?

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12. Are you satisfied with the extent of parental involvement in your school? If not, what could be the barrier to school-based involvement?

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13. What programme(s) could be used by policy makers or schools to help poor parents to enable them to actively participate in the education of their children?

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14. What strategies would you recommend to counter barriers to parental involvement in your school community?

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APPENDIX A2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE TEACHERS

- What is your opinion on parental involvement in the context of your school?
- What are the responsibilities of parents in the education of their children?
- How do you contact parents or communicate with them?
- In what ways are parents involved in the school activities?
- How do parents become involved in the education of their children at home?
- What are the home-based barriers that limit effective parental involvement?
- What do you think could be done to prohibit those home barriers?
- What are the barriers facing parental involvement at school level?
- How can in-service teachers' training help you to work with parents in your school communities?
- What are your expectations of parents in your school? Or are you satisfied with the level of parental involvement in your school community?
- Do you think parents need skills in order to meet up with these expectations?
- What would you require in order to support parental involvement in your school community?
- What do you do as a teacher to encourage parental involvement in your school?
- What are the strategies to promote parental involvement in your school community?
- What programme or projects would you recommend in order to improve the level of parental involvement in your school community?

APPENDIX A3

FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE PARENTS

- What are the barriers facing parental involvement? What could be done to overcome these barriers?
- Are you satisfied with the degree of involvement in your child's learning at home? If not what could be the barriers to home involvement?
- Are you satisfied with the degree of involvement in your child's education at school? If not what could be the barrier for parental involvement at school level?
- Do you have time to discuss school activities with your child or children?
- Do you have the opportunities to help in your children's homework? Or do you struggle with that?
- Do you find it easy to access your children's school without a problem? Or how do you travel to school meetings?
- How does your personal situation affect your involvement in the education of your child? Elaborate more.
- What strategies would you recommend to the relevant authorities to enable you and other parents to actively get involved in the education of your child?
- What would the programme to develop parental involvement in the context of your school community look like? Or what would you advise the people in charge to do in order to strengthen parental involvement?
- Does the school effectively communicate their expectations regarding parental involvement with you? Or what is the communication with teachers like?
- What would you recommend for more involvement of parents and how do you think the schools can use them?



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

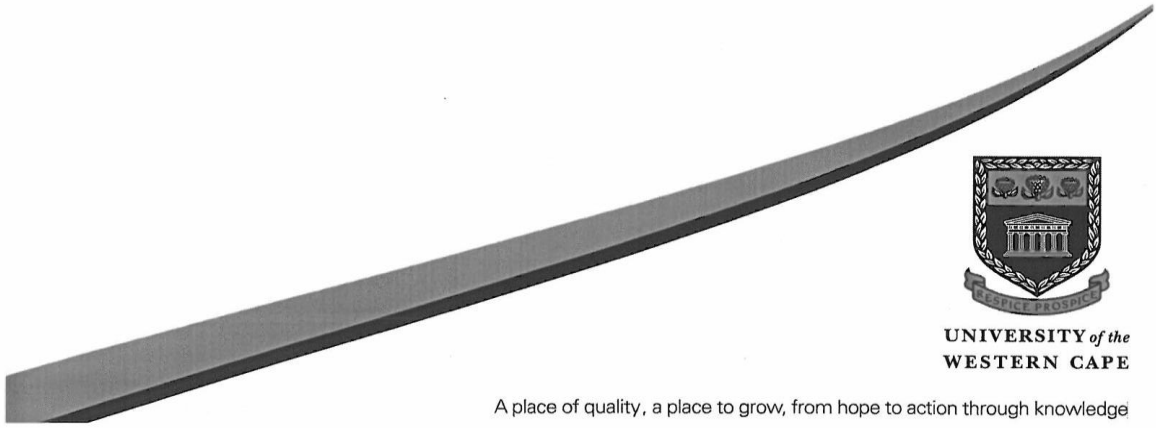
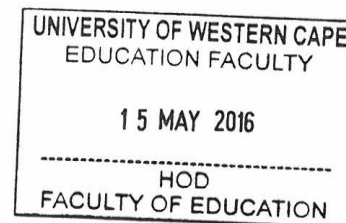
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Fax: +27 (0) 21 959 3943
Website: www.uwc.ac.za
Email: rmaarman@uwc.ac.za

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Ikechucwu Oji (student number: 3417030) is a registered student at the above-mentioned faculty. He is busy studying towards a Masters degree in Education with the title "Exploring teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in low income school communities in the Western Cape." He is in the first year of his studies and is progressing very well.

Kindly contact me in case of any questions.

Regards *RFA Maarman*
Dr RFA Maarman (Thesis supervisor)
(Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape)
021-959 2450
rmaarman@uwc.ac.za



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A place of quality, a place to grow, from hope to action through knowledge

APPENDIX C



Education

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Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20160526- 806

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Oji Ikechukwu
1 Old Mutual Building
Durban Road
Bellville
7530

Dear Mr Oji Ikechukwu

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOW INCOME SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **30 May 2016 till 24 June 2016**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 26 May 2016

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE



University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education

Private Box X 17

01 June, 2016

The Principal

Intshinger Primary School

Dear sir/madam

**REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC EXPLORING
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT VIA CAPABILITY
APPROACH: A CASE STUDY OF LOW-INCOME SCHOOL COMMUNITY IN
YOUR SCHOOL.**

My name is Mr. Oji Ikechukwu and I am a Masters student from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am currently working on my research thesis. My research topic is 'Exploring teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in a low income school community in the Western Cape'. The aim of the research is to establish the teachers' perceptions of parental involvement, barriers and remedy to parental involvement.

The research will also seek the parents' opinions with regard to challenges that confront parental involvement as well as perceived solutions, with the view of helping them enhance their involvement for the benefit of the children.

I hereby request for permission to interview the members of the school community, namely, teachers and the parents. I would also, with your permission, like to observe some of the school daily activities.

Your kind assistance in granting me permission to carry out the interviews and allowing me to obtain the necessary information will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your kind assistance.

Yours sincerely

Oji Ikechukwu



APPENDIX E

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE



INFORMED CONCENT FORM FOR THE TEACHERS

Dear Teacher

My name is Mr. Oji Ikechukwu and I am a Masters student from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am currently working on my research thesis. My research topic is Exploring teachers' perceptions of parental involvement via the Capability Approach: A case of a low income school community. The aim of the research is to establish teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the context of your school.

I believe that you have experience on how parents are involved in their children education. The research will seek to establish teachers' perceptions of parental involvement as well as the barriers and remedy to effective parental involvement. The research will also seek from the parents' view of what barriers that confront them from effectively being involved in their children's education including what they may recommend with the view to helping them enhance their involvement for the benefit of the children.

The questionnaire will take up to 20-30 minutes to complete, it is requested of you to complete it fully at your most convenient time from now till at least next week Wednesday. Your participation is completely voluntary and if at any time you feel uncomfortable and wish to withdraw from the participation, you are free to do so. Also, you are free to ask questions for further clarification should there be any issue you needed clarity on in respect of the questions. The interview will be recorded with an audio device in order not to miss any of the information while taking down notes. The interview section will also require your full participation.

Please try to answer all questions and questionnaires as fully as possible as you are assured that you will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity. No clues of your identity or your school identity will be given in the final report.

If you agree to participate in the study, please kindly sign the consent form bellow.

For any research related queries, kindly contact my supervisor, Dr R.F.A Maarman on: 021-958 2450 or email rmaarman@uwc.ac.za.

If you need more information, please kindly contact me on 0762241963 or email 3417030@myuwc.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

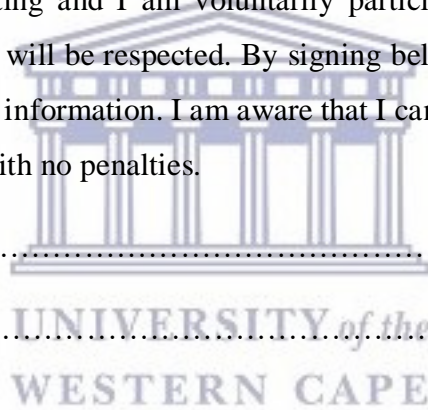
Oji Ikechukwu

CONSENT FORM

I.....
.....agree to participate in the research indicated above. The purpose of the study was explained to me through writing and I am voluntarily participating. I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation at any time during the study with no penalties.

Signature.....

Date.....



APPENDIX F

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE



INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Dear Parent

My name is Oji Ikechukwu, I am a Masters student from the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. I am currently working on my research pertaining to parental involvement. The research seeks your opinion on challenges and solutions to effective parental involvement.

I would like to have your view on what challenges you face such that restricts you from actively being involved in the education of your children. I would also want to find out suggestions in terms of solutions to parental involvement in the context of your school community. Your views will assist this research in understanding the barriers and what could be done to enhance parental involvement.

You are hereby requested to participate in the study by making yourself available for interviews on the 14th of June at the school premises at 12:00hrs in the morning. Also, kindly indicate when I can visit your home with your child (learner) in order to conduct a home interview with you.

The conversation will be recorded in order not to miss any of the provided information while taking down notes. Your contribution in this research will be treated confidential and with anonymity. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and if you at any point feel uncomfortable with the interview questions, you are free to withdraw from participating in this research.

Please, kindly answer all the questions as fully as possible because you know what barriers parents face in getting involved in their children's education.

If you agree to participate in the study, please kindly sign the consent form bellow.

For any research related queries, kindly contact my supervisor, Dr R.F.A Maarman on: 021-958 2450 or email rmaarman@uwc.ac.za.

If you need more information, please kindly contact me on 0762241963 or email 3417030@myuwc.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Oji Ikechukwu

CONSENT FORM

I.....
.....agree to participate in the research indicated above. The purpose of the study was explained to me through writing and I am voluntarily participating. I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected. By signing below I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation at any time during the study with no penalties.

Signature.....

Date.....

