

The role that parents play in their children's academic progress at a
previously disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town.

By

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The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

A full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

University of the Western Cape
Supervisor: Dr. Trevor Moodley

2016

Declaration

I declare that the role that parents play in their children's academic progress at a previously disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town is my own work that has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Richard Daniel Page

November 2016

Signed: _____

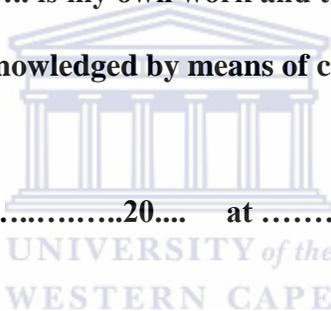


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quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

The role that parents play in their children's academic progress at a previously disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town.

Different studies indicate that parents, who offer their services as volunteers at their children's school, assist with homework and participate in school activities, can influence the learners' academic success in a positive manner (Lunenberg & Irby, 2002; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Therefore, parents are considered to be one of the most important and indispensable stakeholders in education.

Parental involvement in their children's schooling is a critical factor that influences academic success of learners, but despite its importance, parental involvement at previously disadvantaged primary schools appears to be discouragingly low. This study explored the role parents play in their children's academic progress at a previously disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town. The study attempted to answer the following research questions: (i) How does parental involvement influence the academic achievement of their children? (ii) What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's academic achievement? (iii) Which factors enhance and hinder parental involvement across the phases of primary schooling? (iv) How does parental involvement in children's academic progress change over time as learners' progress through the primary schooling phase?

The study is located within the interpretive paradigm, using qualitative case study design. The study began by undertaking a literature review to explore the phenomenon of parental involvement in their children's schooling and its relationship to the academic achievement of learners. Therefore, data was collected using three groups of participants. Participants were purposively chosen with the aim of exploring perspectives about parental involvement (in their children's schooling) from diverse role players. Data was collected via questionnaires and individual semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed thematically.

The study's findings report on parental involvement in terms of both school-based (e.g. voluntary assistance at school) as well as home-based involvement (e.g. homework activities). The findings of this study revealed that parental involvement can positively influence academic achievement of primary school learners. The parent participants regarded education as important and this notion was affirmed by the

learner participants. There was also sufficient evidence in this study to suggest that the parent participants associated the concept of parental involvement with more home-based activities.

The learner participants in this study expressed both positive and negative feelings about their parents' involvement with regard to their homework activities. The learner participants reported that their mothers rather than their fathers assisted them with homework. The weaker scholastic achievement learner participants reported that they received less homework assistance from their parents in comparison to the average and strong scholastic achievement groups. The parent participants also reported that they were unable to assist their children with certain homework activities. The parent participants reported that the homework workload was far too much for their children. Encouraging their children to read was more prevalent in the average and strong scholastic achievement categories than the weak scholastic achievement group. The findings revealed that those parents who were more involved in their children's schooling produced academically stronger learners than those who were less involved.

The educator participants reported that parental involvement had a positive influence on the learners' academic achievement. The findings highlight the various factors responsible for enhancing and hindering parental involvement at a specific primary school. The study revealed that parental support declined as the learner's progressed from one phase to the next.

There is no doubt that parental involvement plays a pivotal role in a learner's academic achievement. Furthermore, since education is often regarded as the primary way to develop our country, encouraging parental involvement in their children's schooling is essential in developing an educational society.

Key Words

parental involvement, academic achievement, education, parent, educator, socio-economic status, previously disadvantaged school, primary school, learner

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

WCED	=	Western Cape Educational Department
SGB	=	School Governing Body
SASA	=	South African Schools Act
DoE	=	Department of Education
SES	=	Socio-economic status
CAPS	=	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
NCS	=	National Curriculum Statement
RNCS	=	Revised National Curriculum Statement



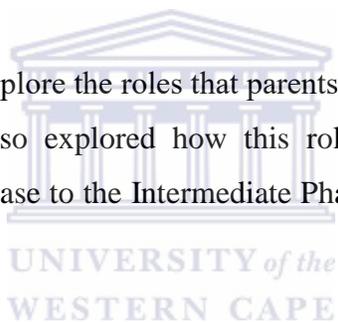
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and background to the study

1.1 Introduction

There is compelling evidence that parental involvement has a positive effect on learners' academic achievement. Many studies corroborate this notion so its significance can scarcely be over emphasised (Brannon, 2008; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Hoover-Demsey & Sandler, 1995; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Epstein, 2009). However, there is little South African research available on the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement of previously disadvantaged primary school learners (Dekker & Lemmer, 1998; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Mmotlane, Winnaar & Wa Kivulu, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to explore the roles that parents played in their children's academic progress at school. This study also explored how this role changed over time as learner's progressed from the Foundation Phase to the Intermediate Phase and eventually the Senior Phase in a primary school environment.



It is believed that most parents care about their children's welfare, well-being and education. There are so many benefits that arise from parental involvement which includes positive attitudes of learners towards their school and schoolwork, improved behaviours, a decrease in truancy, a decline in the drop-out rate, improved academic performance and a decrease in delinquency (Dekker, Decker & Brown, 2007; Dekker & Lemmer, 1998; Kruger, 1998; Pillay, 1998; Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001). Before South Africa became a democracy in 1994, the previous government did not take advantage of the role that all stakeholders, especially parents, were capable of playing in the education of the learners of previously disadvantaged schools. Instead of tapping into this resource to enable effective learning and academic growth, parents from the previously disadvantaged racial groups were kept on the outside and discouraged to give valuable input into the education of their children (Mkwanazi, 1993; Mncwabe, 1992; Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001).

This study provides an understanding about the concept of parental involvement, in relation to the learner's academic activities and their academic achievement. Since the study focuses on two cohorts of primary school learners, a group of grade 3 and a group of grade 7 learners, the study also tries to establish whether parental involvement declines as the learners become older and move from one phase to the next.

Education is regarded as the building blocks for any country and therefore, educationalists have recognised the importance of parental involvement in education. They believe such involvement could influence the learner's educational achievement in a positive manner (David & Goel, 2007; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006).

Education in South Africa went through a transformation which was characterised by the acceptance of parental involvement rather than its exclusion. Following the 1994 democratic elections, a new educational system was established in order to create equity amongst all racial groups in South Africa. In order for this to be successful, a National Department and nine provincial departments of education were established. Parental involvement in their children's schooling was encouraged through legislation such as the South African Schools Act in 1996 (South Africa, DoE, 1996). These measures facilitated an inclusive environment by making parents important partners in the education of their children. In this manner parents began playing active roles in the school such as being involved in school's governance. The South African Schools Act of 1996 stipulates that the principal is the official manager of any public school, while governance is the duty of the school's governing body where parents are represented.

The South African School's Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 provides for parental involvement in their children's schooling in different ways, including: assistance with fund-raising events, helping with the management of school resources, infrastructural development and school maintenance. The said Act fully acknowledges parents' rights to be involved in school governance. According to Section 6.1 of the Act, parents should take an active role in their children's schoolwork and make it possible for the children to complete assigned homework. They should also attend meetings that the Governing Body convenes (Section 6.2) and be informed of their roles as stakeholders of the school. In addition, parents are given the opportunities to participate in

various portfolios such as serving on the various committees offered by a school. The new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) also stipulates that parents and the community have an important role to play in curriculum management (South Africa, DoE, 2012). Literature reveals that parents make a significant contribution to the development of their children's education (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Friedman, 2011; Lemmer, 2007).

It is clear from previous research that parental involvement is recognised as being critical to learner achievement. In light of this realisation, this study hopes to establish the nature of parental involvement in their children's academic achievement in schools, especially at a previously disadvantaged school in the Kensington community. The findings of this research can be regarded as important because the results may be utilised to enhance our understanding of the role parents play in the education of their children.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Circumstances that motivated me to undertake this study relate to my experiences in education before and after South Africa became a democracy in 1994 as well as information acquired from reviewing related literature. For the past twenty-three years, I have been an educator at a primary school situated in a previously disadvantaged community. I have taught many learners who came from different backgrounds and therefore had a strong desire to find out whether parental involvement influences academic achievement of primary school learners.

Being in the educational field for some years now, I have also observed that parents seem to gradually minimise their involvement in their children's schooling as the children progress to the higher grades in the primary school. After reviewing the relevant literature, I found that the literature supports my beliefs that parental involvement is greater in the Foundation Phase than the Senior Phase of a primary school, which is grade 7. (Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005; Hasley, 2005; Hornby, 2000; Pomerantz, Moorman & Litwack, 2007). I therefore wanted to test my observations in this regard, and explore the factors that influenced the parents' involvement as learners' progress from the Foundation Phase to the Senior Phase in a primary school.

After reading many articles about how parental involvement positively affected the academic achievements of learners, I became convinced that the topic would be the focus of my research. For example, a South African study by Lemmer (2007) concluded that parental involvement was a feasible way to improve a culture of learning in schools. It is my belief and experience, both as an educator and parent, that parents today are often intimidated by their children's homework and experienced feelings of inadequacy in helping their children with their schoolwork. Therefore, many do not get involved with their children's homework not because they are uninterested; but because they lack knowledge and the confidence to do so.

I found it interesting having read that parental involvement in areas such as homework, general assistance and interest in the child's school could positively affect their children's academic achievement (Brannon, 2008; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Taylor & Pearson, 2002). The findings of most studies suggest that if schools encouraged parental involvement, this could lead to educational growth and significant academic improvement of learners (Fan & Williams, 2010; Monadjem, 2013, MacNeil & Patin, 2000).

Research about the impact of parental involvement in their children's schoolwork on academic achievement is normally influenced by various factors. Some studies indicate a positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Green *et al.*, 2007). Other studies identify factors such as socio-economic status that influence levels of parental involvement. Low socio-economic status is associated with low levels of parental involvement in their children's schooling (Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon & Salinas, 2009; Fink & Stoll, 1998; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Mmotlane *et al.*, 2009). It is believed that poor socio-economic status and low educational backgrounds negatively affect academic achievement because they prevent access to vital resources which creates additional stress at home (Eamon, 2005; Majoribanks, 2002; Jeynes, 2007). The link between poverty and the low levels of parental involvement by poor parents in their children's schooling, with the concomitant poor scholastic achievement, is especially concerning for South Africa. Education is seen by many as the panacea to the high levels of poverty among majority of the country's population (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003).

Various researchers such as Stormont, Herman and Revike (2007) conclude that a child who was raised in a more affluent household and whose parents are well-educated is more likely to perform better than a child from an illiterate family. This notion is supported by David and Goel (2007) who conclude that children who are brought up in more affluent households have the tendency to perform better at school. This is because a child from an educated family probably receives adequate support in the form of a suitable environment for academic work, parental support and guidance. According to Song and Hattie (2004) families that come from diverse socio- economic backgrounds create different learning environments that could either affect the child's academic achievement in a positive or negative manner.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Research indicates an association between parental involvement and the academic achievement of learners (Sheldon, 2009). However; it seems as if a limited number of South African studies have been conducted, especially at previously disadvantaged schools. It is reported that lower levels of parent education and economic status do not negatively affect the performance of children if parents had high motivation and aspirations for their child's achievement (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Mmotlane *et al.*, 2009). However, though parental involvement is important for all children, the nature of parental involvement differs according to race, parent education, economic status of parents and family structure (Paratore, Hindin, Krol-Sinclair & Duran, 1999; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davis, 2007). Against this background, I felt that it would be interesting to conduct a research study to see how parental involvement influences academic achievement of previously disadvantaged primary school learners in the Western Cape, given the dearth of localised research in these contexts.

1.4 Research question

Research questions provide preliminary direction for the study and guides the researcher during the research process. They regulate the research methodology and control the study's direction. The examination of parental involvement includes questioning of "what", "how" and "why" (Creswell, 2003). The main research question that this study hoped to answer is:

What role does parental involvement play in the academic achievement of primary school learners?

The following sub-questions are relevant to the study:

- How does parental involvement influence the academic achievement of their children?
- What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's academic achievement?
- Which factors enhance and hinder parental involvement across the phases of primary school learners?
- How does parental involvement in children's academic progress change over time as learners' progress through the primary schooling phase?

1.5 **Research methodology**



1.5.1 **Research paradigm**

There are various definitions and descriptions of a research paradigm. According to Bogdan and Knopp-Bilken (2007, p274) a paradigm is “a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research.” Denzin and Lincoln (2005) believe that the notion of a paradigm encompasses epistemology that refers to how we view the world and ontology, the raising of basic questions about the nature of reality and methodology, thus focusing on how we gain knowledge about the world.

This study was located within an interpretative paradigm because the research question required the understanding of the problem from the perspective of those involved. This type of enquiry is concerned with understanding how individuals make sense of their everyday lives. In a specific situation Maree (2010) states that the interpretative approach allows researchers to focus on the understanding of what is happening in a given context because it helps determine how their participants' realities are formulated. In line with the aforementioned statement, as a researcher, I gained an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence parental involvement in their children's primary schooling across the two phases, namely, the Foundation and Senior phases.

1.5.2 Research approach

The research approach used in this research is qualitative in nature. Straus and Corbin (1990) described qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings that are not obtained by any statistical procedures. Thus, qualitative research refers to the study of life stories, behaviour, organisational functioning, social movements or education by assisting the researcher in formulating new questions, guiding the researcher to assumptions and by instilling in the researcher an appreciation of complexity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Qualitative research is based on the understanding of the point of view of the informant (Simango, 2006).

Mouton and Marais (1990) shed more light on the subject of qualitative research methodology in educational research. They describe qualitative approaches as those in which the procedures are not strictly formalised. Qualitative methods of research seek to understand social reality through strategies such as observations and interviews which yield descriptive data by exploring and understanding the meaning each participant assigns to a social problem (Creswell, 2009). Events are adequately understood only if they are seen in context (Merriam, 2007). Therefore, a qualitative researcher immerses him/herself in the setting. Qualitative researchers have the ability to tap into their participants' everyday experiences, especially when observing them in their natural settings (Creswell, 2007).

As a researcher I did not allow my own values to influence the outcome of the research of the phenomena under investigation but lived through and re-created the experiences of others and this helped me to determine how their realities were shaped (Henning, Van Rensberg & Smit, 2004; Maree, 2007). In order to prevent my own values and assumptions from influencing the outcome of the study I implemented the concept of bracketing. According to Bertelsen (2005) bracketing can be regarded as a process where you as a researcher distance yourself from previously held theories and assumptions so that you become a non-participating observer of the world. No preconceived hypothesis about reality was used. Thus, in this study, parents, learners and educators had the opportunity to describe their own experiences without the researcher needing to provide ready-made solutions to their problems. Events were studied in their natural settings without any form of modification or construction as I wanted those who were studied to

speak for themselves (Creswell, 2007). I used a primary school situated in a low socio-economic area in the Cape metropole as my research site and obviously the school was given a pseudonym to protect its identity.

1.5.3 Research design

Since the study was interpretive in nature, an appropriate research design was selected for gathering data to answer the research question was a case study. A case study is regarded as a method that allows the individuality of each case to come out as a persuasive voice (Gummesson, 2000). Aligned with the above statement, Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2007) stipulate that a case study is conducted when an in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a specific social phenomenon is proposed. Therefore, case studies combine data collection methods such as archives, interviews, questionnaires and observations (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

In this study the participants were a group of grade 3 and 7 learners, their parents and class teachers. The research hoped to explore: the role parents played in their children's academic progress, and to see whether the nature of parental involvement changed as the children progressed from the Foundation to the Senior Phase within a primary school environment.

1.5.4 Population and sampling

For the purpose of this study, the participants were primary school parents, educators and learners at one primary school located within the Cape metropole. The term 'primary' refers to the phase of schooling that includes grades R to 7. The school involved in the research had a learner population of more than 500 learners. Participants included in this study were six educators, eighteen learners (nine grade 3 and nine grade 7 learners) and eighteen parents. The learners were chosen according to their academic record of strong, average or weak which was obtained from the school's academic promotion schedules. The school in question can also be classified as a previously disadvantaged school, located in a low socio-economic area.

1.5.5 Data collection

Various authors are of the opinion that research involves the collection and analysis of data. This can be realised through observations, interviews, questionnaires or a combination of these approaches (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001). In this study the following collection techniques were utilised: interviews and questionnaires.

I used five sample groups (two parent groups consisting of nine participants each, two learner groups consisting of eighteen learners and one educator group consisting of four educators) to be part of the study. Individual semi-structured interviews were administered to ten parents of the first parent group to establish their understanding of parental involvement. The advantage of using this method was the fact that the researcher could prompt and probe in-depth, the issues related to the study's focus. The researcher could also explain and rephrase the questions if the respondents were unclear about the questions (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). The second parent group (which included the interview group) had to complete a questionnaire. Questionnaires could be considered the easiest way of obtaining information from people and could be issued to them in a variety of situations. Rich qualitative data could be obtained from open-ended questions because it allows the respondents to elaborate on their viewpoints (McLeod, 2014). The two learner groups consisted of eighteen learners (nine from grade 3 and nine from grade 7) who completed a questionnaire under the supervision of the researcher. The educator group comprised of four educators and they also completed a questionnaire. All the questionnaires were designed to shed light on the focus of the study. These methods were therefore sufficient to collect the information- rich data which was analysed to provide relevant answers to the research question and sub-questions.

1.5.6 Data analysis

The main reason for data analysis is to structure the data in such a way that the researcher is able to interpret the data. Qualitative thematic analysis was applied to the data in order to answer the research question. This type of analysis is suitable to the research paradigm and design because it results in coding, which eventually guides the researcher to formulate his/her themes (Henning, *et*

al., 2004; Strydom, 2011). In order to ensure rigour in the analysis of data, the six steps proposed by Braun and Clark (2006) were utilised. The analysis of data is discussed in more detail in Chapter three.

1.6 Trustworthiness

The concept of validity and reliability are normally associated with quantitative research whereas the term trustworthiness is related to qualitative research. The aim of trustworthiness in qualitative research is to strengthen the argument that the findings are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Guba's model for ensuring the component of trustworthiness in qualitative research was used by incorporating the four criteria of this model namely: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. The applicability of Guba's model to my study is also discussed in detail in Chapter three.



1.7 Ethical considerations

As a researcher I tried to follow all the ethical guidelines as proposed by the ethical guidelines of the University of the Western Cape. I maintained my professional responsibility towards my research participants and tried to ensure that a high level of respect was maintained throughout my study. A seven-point checklist by Patton in Merriam (2009) was used to provide guidance with regard to the ethical considerations of the study and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Piper and Simons (2005) explain an ethical act as doing no harm to research participants. Ethical issues in this research stemmed from how I acted towards my research subjects. Ethical issues that were considered in this study were:

- Permission and informed consent: prior to conducting the study, an application for ethical clearance was made to the Senate Research Ethics Committee, University of the Western Cape. Clearance was granted with the registration number: 14/9/59. (Appendix 12)
- Permission was sought from the Western Cape Education Department and on receipt of this written permission (Appendix 10); I approached the school principal of the research

setting for his permission to conduct the research at the school. Next I explained in detail the purposes, procedures and intended outcomes of the research to all potential participants prior to them giving their consent to participate in the study.

- Confidentiality and anonymity: during the data collection process, interviewees were informed of their right not only to speak in confidence; but also to refuse publication of any material that they think might harm them in any way. Participants were assured of the protection of privacy and anonymity of individuals in reporting.
- Right of withdrawal: participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage with no negative consequences upon withdrawal.
- Accuracy of data transcription: the researcher avoided falsification of data by reporting the exact findings that emerged from the study.

1.8 Delimitations

The study was restricted to a primary school in the Western Cape namely in the Cape Town area. Janesick (2000) suggests that researchers select sites and develop rationales for the choice of these sites. Based on this suggestion, the area was purposefully chosen because the researcher is an educator in that geographical area (although not teaching at the school where the study was conducted) and was able to relate to the parent community of that particular region.

1.9 Limitations

The study was limited to educators, learners and parents of a single primary school. The sampling method and sampling size therefore preclude the generalisation of this study's findings to a broader population of primary school learners' academic progress and the influence that parental involvement had on such progress.

1.10 Definition of key terms

The following frequently used terms are defined:

1.10.1 Parental involvement

There is no universal agreement on what parental involvement entails, however, for the purpose of this study, we will assume that involvement relates to school activities such as: assisting the school with fundraising events, reading to the child at home, assisting with homework activities etc. (Kgaffe, 2001). One could argue that all children have two sets of important educators in their lives, namely their parents and their school teachers. Parents can be regarded as the primary educators until the child attends formal schooling; but remain a major influence throughout the child's schooling career. The school and parents both have crucial roles to play.

1.10.2 Academic Achievement

Academic achievement can also be referred to as academic performance in this study and it relates directly to the educational outcomes of the learner. Academic Achievement can be seen as the grades (academic results) the learners receives at school which is an indication of how well or how poorly he/she is doing at school (Van der Berg, Wood & Le Roux, 2002).

Academic achievement in South Africa is normally measured by examinations and continuous assessments which are administered to the learners throughout the academic year.

1.10.3 Education

Education can be regarded as an experience that has an effect on the human mind, character or physical ability and thus expands the individual's cognitive ability. In its technical sense, education could be viewed as the process that affords learners the opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills in a formal academic space that reflects curriculum and instruction (Hornby, 2000). This process is sometimes called schooling and in this study we are referring to a primary school context.

1.10.4 Parent¹

¹ Parents in this thesis refers to both biological and non-biological parents, including guardians, who are the primary caregivers of the children involved in this study involved reading and re-reading the collected data.

In this study, a parent can be regarded as any adult that takes full responsibility of a minor's welfare, upbringing and education to ensure that they are guided towards becoming responsible and independent adults. According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the term parent, in relation to the child includes:

The adoptive parent of a child, but excludes the biological father of a child conceived through the rape of or incest with the child's mother; any person who is biologically related to a child by reason only of being a gamete donor for the purpose of artificial fertilisation; and a parent whose parental responsibilities and rights in respect of a child have been terminated (p. 15).

1.10.5 Educator

The term educator according to the Employment Act of Educators 76 of 1998 refers to any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and any educational psychological services at any public school and who is appointed in a post on any educator establishment under this Act (South Africa. Employment Act of Educators 76, 1998). In the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996, DoE (1996) the term teacher is replaced by the term educator but in recent years since the introduction of the new curriculum (CAPS) the teacher term is now used again.

1.10.6 Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status (SES) can be regarded as a family's economic and social position in society based on income, education, occupation and wealth. Socio-economic status is normally divided into three distinct categories namely: high, middle and poor socio-economic status. Any individual or family can be placed into any one of these categories depending on their household income, education and occupation (Sirin, 2005).

1.10.7 Previously disadvantaged groups

The previously disadvantaged groups in this study refers to the previously disenfranchised population groups in South Africa, i.e. Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. According to the National Empowerment Fund Act 105 of 1998 these population groups were socially, economically and educationally deprived by the then apartheid South African government through inequitable racial treatment (South Africa, Department of Trade and Industry, 1998).

1.10.8 Primary school

In South Africa, a primary school is a school that usually includes schooling from grade R to grade 7. The Grade R year is optional and learners begin formal education in grade one. Foundation Phase (grade R to 3) normally lasts four years where learners are exposed to basic subjects such as Home Language, First Additional Language, Life Skills and Mathematics. (Western Cape Educational Department, School Curriculum, Gr. R to 12, 2012).

During the Intermediate (Grades 4-6) and Senior Phase (Grade 7-9) learners are taught different subjects such as Home Language, First Additional Language, Mathematics, Social Science (History and Geography), Life Orientation, Natural Science & Technology. The Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) includes the above-mentioned subjects but Natural Science and Technology are split into two separate subjects and it also incorporates Economic and Management Science (Western Cape Educational Department [WCED], School Curriculum, Grade R to 12, 2012).

1.10.9 Learner

According to the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996, (South Africa, DoE, 1996) a "learner" means any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of this Act. It is also compulsory for every learner to be enrolled at a school when the learner turns seven years old until the learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade.

1.11 Structure of the thesis

The thesis of the study is organised into chapters. Each of the chapters deals with a specific aspect of the investigation.

Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study

Its purpose is to give motivation for the study, presents a brief background on which the study is cemented, and clarifies the problem that initiates the study. It presents the status quo regarding parental involvement affecting learners' academic achievement as well as the role parent's plays in their children's school work. It also outlines the general overview of the study which contains the research problem, question, purpose, aim, objectives, assumptions, significance, rationale, and definition of terms.

Chapter Two: Literature review and conceptual framework

This chapter discusses the literature with regard to factors influencing parental involvement, in relation to the learners' academic achievement as they pass through the different phases at a primary school. The literature provides a theoretical framework within which research findings are discussed.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter discusses the research paradigm, approach and design as well as the population and sampling. It includes a description of the procedures followed in data collection and analysis, validity and reliability considerations, as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Presentation and discussion of results

This chapter discusses the study's findings in relation to previous studies and other related literature. It includes discussions about similarities and differences of findings to those of other studies. It also highlights any unique findings revealed by the study.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusion and recommendations

In this chapter the findings of the study is summarised, conclusions drawn and recommendations relevant to the topic is made.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

The purpose of the review of literature is to familiarise the researcher with existing knowledge and information in the area of the study. The literature review can be described in three distinct ways: positioning the study into the correct context, affording the researcher the opportunity to examine pre-existing literature with common topics and concepts, and allowing the researcher to identify possible shortcomings in the research field (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This chapter begins by looking at the legal obligation parents have towards their children's schooling, then exploring the concept of parents' involvement in relation to their children's schooling. Next the significance and barriers to parental involvement are explored, followed by factors influencing parental involvement and developmental considerations. Thereafter, a discussion follows of parental involvement in relation to: non-academic outcomes, the transitioning from foundation to senior phase at a primary school and different models of parental involvement. The chapter also focuses on the theoretical framework incorporating Epstein's typology of parental involvement, which provides a lens in exploring the topic under discussion. This study explores how the above-mentioned topics intertwine with each other in order to validate the research topic.

Parental involvement in education has been an important topic among educationalists, especially those who strive to improve the academic achievement of children (Hoover – Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). After scrutinising the literature regarding parental involvement and academic achievement, Henderson and Mapp (2002), stipulate that learner achievement is frequently defined by progress reports, class averages, attendance, progression to the following grade and improved behaviour. Many researchers are aware that a strong positive relationship between the home and school play a pivotal role in the development and education of all children (Edwards & Alldred, 2000; Richardson, 2009; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Sheldon, 2009). This notion has been supported by various studies that have shown that good co-operation between schools, homes and the communities can lead to improved academic achievement for learners. Parents

who engage in their children's education will produce successful learners because of their continued support (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Sheldon, 2009).

Sanders and Sheldon (2009) are of the opinion that schools become successful when an intimate relationship among learners, parents, educators and the community has been formed.

2.2 Legal obligations of parents towards their children's education

Every parent is responsible for children in their care to receive an education by ensuring that they attend a school. According to the South African Schools Act of 1996, every parent must ensure that every child, for whom he/ she is responsible, must attend school from the beginning of the academic year in which such a child turns seven years old until the end of the year in which the child turns fifteen years old (SA, Department of Education [DoE], 1996). It is thus compulsory for parents to adhere to the abovementioned Act and to fulfill their obligations and responsibility towards their children's education. According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, parental responsibility refers to taking responsibility of a minor so that the best interest of the child is paramount (South Africa, Department of Justice, 2005). If the biological parent is unable to provide for the child then this parental responsibility can be acquired by another party through: application to the court for a residence order, applying to be appointed as the child's legal guardian, being appointed guardianship because of an emergency protection order and applying to adopt the child.

The relationship between parent and child is considered an important phenomenon in all societies because it strengthens the relationship and ensures that all dependents are protected by law. Consequently, the parent-child relationship is given special legal consideration by government to address child abuse or neglect. In addition, parental roles have evolved over time and the law had to be reviewed in order to accommodate these changes. For this reason, the legal rights that were once regarded as the sole right of the father are now shared between both parents (South Africa, Department of Justice, 2005). Since the Children's Act 38 of 2005 emphasises that the best interest of the child is paramount, the legal obligations placed on parents by the said Act extends to their children's education. It can thus be assumed that one way of acting in the best interest of the child, would be for parents to get involved in their children's schooling. This could have a

positive impact on their children's education because according to Henderson and Berla (1994) children perform better academically when parents are engaged in the learning process.

2.3 Conceptualising parental involvement

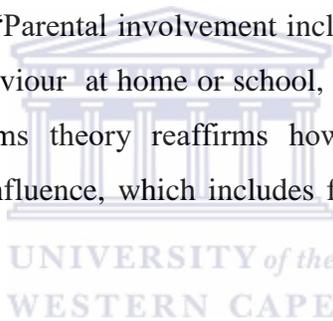
When embarking on a study involving parental involvement, the initial step is to clarify the meaning of the term. Similar to other terms used in education, there is no standard definition of the term, parental involvement; it is open to interpretation. There are therefore many definitions of the term (Lemmer, 2007). Many studies highlight the different reasons why parental involvement is important and this often leads to disagreement on the definition (Jeynes, 2005; Lopez & Stoelting, 2010; Bower & Griffen, 2011). Despite the various definitions, it has become apparent that parental involvement is a topic that has been extensively researched and still appears to be a complicated phenomenon with plenty of room for further research (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

One definition of parental involvement is that it is the investment parents make in their children's lives (Telel-Sahin, Inal & Ozbey, 2011). Other studies state that parental involvement refers to any parental attitudes, behaviour, style or activities within or outside school that encourages their children to be successful (Young, Austin & Growe, 2011). Gurbuzturk and Sad (2013) state that parental involvement refers to parental behaviour that directly or indirectly affects a learner's cognitive ability and academic achievement. However, various authors suggest that researchers find one common definition of parental involvement to be used in the educational arena. This definition is urgently required in order to eliminate confusion amongst parents, educators, schools and policy makers (Young *et al.*, 2011).

With the spotlight more on the practical nature of parental involvement in schools, Beck (2010) refers to parental involvement as being actively involved in their children's schooling by assisting them with homework, ensuring children have good workspace at home to complete educational activities, attending parent meetings and emphasising the importance of education. There are also different ways that parents view their involvement in the education of their children. Parents are of the opinion that informal activities at home are the most important

contributions to their children's successful achievements at school (Hayes, 2012). These parents regard the helping and checking of homework, reading and talking to their children as well as providing them with the basic necessities of life as the informal activities of involvement that enhances the educational process. On the other hand, educators define parental involvement as the parents' way of supporting the academic needs of their children while parents conceptualised involvement as a means of supporting the overall development of their child's education (Lemmer, 2007).

The school plays a vital role in encouraging involvement and this is further supported by Bower and Griffin (2011), who concur that parental involvement refers to the practical gestures placed on the parents by the school. When considering both the parents and schools, Olmstead (2013) realises that a differentiation must be established between home and school-based involvement. According to Hayes (2012,p.567) "Parental involvement includes not only direct involvement in schools but indirect or hidden behaviour at home or school, which makes it a multi-dimensional construct." The ecological systems theory reaffirms how an individual's development is determined by various levels of influence, which includes factors from both school and home (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).



In this study, the main focus has been limited to the exploration of parental involvement in their children's schooling, as they transition from one phase to another at a primary school. Parental involvement in this study refers to the ways in which parents are actively involved in their children's academic studies (Green *et al.*, 2007).

2.4 Parent involvement and academic outcomes

Since the focus of the current study is to explore how parental involvement in their children's education influences the learners' academic achievement, it is prudent to review previous research in this regard. Parental involvement in education has consistently been found to be positively linked with a learner's academic achievement at school. Research also indicates that children whose parents are more involved in their schooling are more likely to experience academic success than children whose parents are less involved (Hill & Craft, 2003; Marcon,

1999). In fact, various studies conclude that parental involvement in their children's schooling as early as pre-school years, has the ability to improve their children's academic, behavioural and social outcomes (Marcon, 1999; Powell, Diamond, Burchinal & Koehler, 2010; Senechal, 2006a). According to Powell et al., (2010) parental involvement contributes to the development of the learner's pre-literacy skills such as phonological awareness and letter name identification. These skills can be regarded as the building blocks for reading achievement during the primary school years (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

In order to complete certain academic tasks such as reading, writing and mathematics the learner must possess certain cognitive skills. According to Harter and Pike (1984) cognitive competence refers to the extent to which a learner believes that they possess the necessary cognitive skills to be successful when challenged with certain academic tasks. Research indicates that parental involvement in education automatically increases a child's level of competence and therefore they are able to perform better at school (Gonzalez-Dehass, Willems & Holbein, 2005). Furthermore, research suggests that parental involvement influences the academic achievement in the important school subjects such as literacy (reading and writing) and arithmetic (mathematics) (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Yan & Lin, 2005).

Research on the effects of parental involvement on learner's literacy skills has mainly been conducted on learners in the first grades of primary school because this is the time that they are taught how to read (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). In one study conducted in 2000 in Minnesota, United States of America a literacy programme was presented to a group of young children under the guidance of Project EASE (Early Access to Success in Education). During this project educators trained parents how to develop their children's literacy skills by sending home literacy related activities for parents and learners to do together. The study was carried out in four low-income schools and one middle-income school and the results concluded that Project EASE participants had significantly greater language scores than those compared to the control group (Jordan, Snow & Porche, 2000).

At home parental involvement can include: reading to their children, listening and assisting their children with reading, taking them to the library, providing reading materials, assisting with

homework activities and having discussions about school work (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). In the current study some of the questions posed to parents were whether they assist and monitor their children's reading and spelling skills at home. Similar questions that related to literacy skills were also directed to the learner participants. Research has also established that even though the educator has a significant role to play in teaching a child how to read in the Foundation Phase, the parents still remain a very influential factor throughout the learners schooling career (Sheldon, 2009).

It is also a known fact that interactive homework tasks can encourage parents to assist their children in a meaningful way. One of the leading examples relating to this concept is an initiative designed by Epstein and her Johns Hopkins University colleagues called TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork). In a study carried out by TIPS regarding children's writing skills at different middle schools in the United States, Epstein found that parental involvement boosted the writing scores of sixth and eighth grade learners. In addition, those learners involved in the TIPS homework programme also achieved better language art grades compared to those who were not involved in the programme (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1997). Van Voorhis (2003) found similar results in science achievement when comparing learners who had interactive TIPS homework with those who had no such interactive assistance.

Parental involvement could directly influence a learner's ability to be successful in mathematics (Yan & Lin, 2005). According to Sirvani (2007) primary and secondary school learners achieve higher percentages in mathematics if their parents are involved in their education. When parents have high expectations with regard to their children's mathematic results then their children will strive to attain better results (Yan & Lin, 2005). Various studies also suggest that learners' perceptions of their mathematics ability are closely linked to how their parents view their (parents) own ability rather than the actual percentages they (learners) achieve (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Sheldon, 2009). According to Sheldon (2009) many families need help and assistance when it comes to the interaction with their child and mathematics. This is due to the fact that parents feel incompetent with regard to their own ability to assist their children with mathematical tasks. This could be linked to the fact that many parents feel that the mathematics approach to teaching has been changed over the years (Glasgow &

Whitney, 2009). Parents are therefore reluctant to assist their children with mathematical tasks and this could be viewed as a lack of parental involvement.

Given the focus on this study, Stalkera, Brunnera, Maguireb & Mitchell, (2011) highlight the importance of parental involvement as a fundamental factor in building a solid foundation in their children's educational journey, especially for children between the ages of 7 and 16 years (which is also the age range of learners applicable to the current study). Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) underscore that parental involvement is extremely important since it encourages children to improve their results and thereby boost their academic achievement in a positive way.

2.5 Parental involvement and non-academic outcomes

According to Lemmer (2007) most schools find it difficult to keep parents involved even though they are constantly encouraged by the educators to become more involved in school activities. Parental involvement does not only affect academic outcomes, but can also have an impact on non-academic outcomes, such as school attendance, behaviour and attitude towards school (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Some authors also believe that parental involvement may positively facilitate their children's transitioning from one grade to the next, therefore making this experience less stressful for children (Sheldon, 2009). A brief discussion of parental involvement in their children's schooling in relation to some non-academic outcomes follows:

2.5.1 School attendance

Sanders and Sheldon (2009) are of the opinion that it is the duty of the school to work out a strategy to improve learner attendance. If this can be accomplished then it goes without saying, being in school exposes the learners to a positive culture of learning. According to Sheldon (2009) one important factor that increases learner attendance is to establish a good relationship between the home and school. This type of partnership will close the gap between the home and the school and ultimately lead to a reduced absentee rate amongst learners. Good school-parent relations usually lead to greater parental awareness when their children are absent, consequently

enabling parents to monitor and supervise their children's attendance. Certain aspects of parental behaviour such as persistence and consistency are also considered important factors that have the ability to reduce the truancy levels of learners because they (learners) are aware that their parents are monitoring their school attendance (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Sheldon, 2009). If parents are involved in their children's lives they will supervise their children's whereabouts, encourage them to speak about their school day, volunteering their services at school and be willing to join school committees offered at the school (Wong & Hughes, 2006).

2.5.2 Learner behaviour and discipline

One could speculate that a child's behaviour in general is closely related to the family structure as well as the home environment. Sheldon (2009) is of the opinion that certain factors can be regarded as predictive measures that cause youngsters to misbehave. These factors include: inappropriate parenting styles, inconsistent disciplinary approaches, poor parental monitoring and uncontrollable conflict within the home.

Educators believe that the learner's family situation has an influence on their behaviour. Many schools are convinced that if they develop a good relationship with their parent body they are able to improve the learner's behaviour (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Communication between the home and the school can reduce disruptive behaviour and improve positive school behaviour because all rules are clearly defined and constantly being reinforced (Leach & Tan, 1996). McNeal (2012) believes that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement is influenced by social capital (forms, norms and resources) which helps to establish a relationship between the parents and the school. Parental involvement can therefore be considered as a factor that reduces problematic behaviour at school and, in turn, improves academic achievement (McNeal, 2012). In addition, creating such a partnership will also help to improve the learner's academic achievement. Therefore one could generalise and state that the learner's behaviour is closely linked to improved academic achievement (Sheldon, 2009).

Richardson (2009) stresses the importance of parental involvement in their children's schooling by claiming that better behaviour among learners can be considered one of the most important benefits of parental involvement in education because it leads to greater academic success.

2.5.3 Learners' attitude

Learners who are academically successful possess a positive attitude to school and can be considered emotionally and socially better adjusted to their environment (Jeynes, 2005). The attitude of the parents can influence the child's attitude in a positive or negative manner. It is only natural to assume that children whose parents show an active interest in their education will be more motivated, driven and have more self confidence in themselves and in school. These children would know they have the support of their parents and this knowledge will have a positive effect on them in general (Stormont et al., 2007). Learners who are supported both at home and at school display a more positive attitude towards their school work. Therefore, when the parents adopt a positive attitude towards the school and education then their children are more likely to do the same (Galper, Wigfield & Seefeldt, 1997).

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Different studies have found that children were more involved in school related activities if they were motivated by parent-orientated reasons and this led to an improvement in class performance (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). The negative attitude of the parents regarding education can have a detrimental effect on their children's schooling career because parental attitude seems to be associated with their children's attitude towards learning (Stormont *et al.*, 2007).

2.6 **Barriers to parental involvement in their children's schooling**

In their involvement with their children, parents can expect to encounter a few challenges that could have a negative effect on their children's educational development. According to Hill and Taylor (2004) in order to establish and maintain an effective relationship between the family and the school one first need to identify the barriers within that specific community. Below are a few factors that have been identified as barriers to parental involvement in their children's schooling.

2.6.1. Communication

Communication in schools, tend to be a one- sided power relationship from school to the family. When a family is contacted, it is usually because their child is in trouble or some problem that need to be dealt with. When parents only receive negative feedback from the school with regard to their children they feel intimidated to come to school because their parenting style is being questioned (Decker *et al.*, 2007). The educators may seem to have an understanding of what they expect from the parents but often this message is not communicated to the parents (Decker *et al.*, 2007).

There are different factors that influence the effectiveness of parent-school communication. Two of these factors include the parent's inability to assist learners with their schoolwork as well as language barriers. Parents who are probably the main support system of learners may be unsure about what their role is in their children's education or how and when they should assist with academic activities (Griffen & Galassi, 2010). Furthermore, in many instances families whose mother tongue is not that of the school's medium of instruction or differs from that of the educators, may feel inadequate about the language difference or are unable to communicate with the educator in an effective manner (Decker *et al.*, 2007). Due to this language barrier some parents may find it difficult to be involved with school related activities as well as volunteering their time at the school.

Hill and Taylor (2004) are of the opinion that each community has its own unique barriers and resources which needs to be understood. Once this is achieved, then the gap between the school and the family is narrowed and an effective collaboration between the two parties can be established. The school must actively support parent participation in tangible ways but first educators must mediate the barriers to home-school collaboration and then take a proactive stance in helping families to become major participants in their children's education (Olsen & Fuller 2008).

2.6.2 Multiple life demands placed on parents

While many parents would like to maintain their relationship with the school during the learner's school years, only a small proportion receive guidance from schools on how to assist their children with their school work. Life is extremely demanding and parents have commitments and are finding it difficult to balance and manage the multiple demands on their time and resources and are put off being involved because of these commitments (Sanders & Lewis, 2005). Some parents may have long and unpredictable work hours that prevent them from being involved as much as they would like. Most school functions and events are held at times that are convenient for the school and seldom consider the parents circumstances. When school programmes are held during the day, some parents may be at work and unable to attend these events because they cannot get time off from work. Other commitments may include issues such as child-care issues, transport difficulties, far distances to travel to the school, being too busy – not always by choice, family responsibilities as well as daily living demands (Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001).

In terms of our own country, Mbokodi, Singh and Msila (2003) as well as Bracke and Cort (2011) highlight some of the factors that discourage involvement in education in South Africa. Unemployment is one such factor; unemployed parents are unable to provide books and other relevant learning materials which are necessary for the learners to be successful. Parents' levels of education discourage them from helping their children with schoolwork. A shortage of support programmes that empower disadvantaged parents to participate in education also discourages parental involvement in education.

2.6.3 Cultural beliefs

South Africa can be regarded as a culturally diverse society and desegregation in our educational system after 1994 was inevitable. Educational institutions such as schools and universities were faced with great challenges because their learner /student population went through a transformation. As the dynamics at these educational institutions changed, new educational legislature had to be instituted to accommodate the new changes. The curriculum had to change to cater for all cultural groups and educationalists had to teach and manage learners with different

cultures, languages and backgrounds that were totally unfamiliar to them (Du Toit, 1995). In many schools in South Africa, there is likely to be a dominant cultural group as opposed to the minority group. There is also the belief that minority groups come from educationally and culturally inferior backgrounds and that changing the curriculum to meet their needs leads to the school lowering their otherwise high standards (Jansen, 2004). Schools also have the tendency to marginalise parents and recreate the dominate power relationships of race and social class reflective of the larger society (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002). According to Delgado-Gaitan (1991) some schools often develop activities that cater for the majority cultural group of the school, without considering the needs of the minority groups.

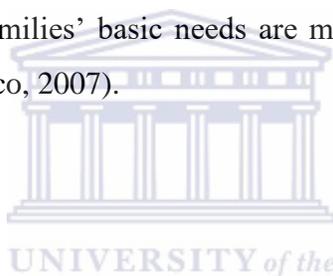
The school's attempt to improve the relationship with the learners' families and communities are hindered (at times) by the beliefs among families and educators because of misconceptions about different religions and cultures (Decker et al, 2007). Some parents' cultural beliefs encourage them not to be too involved in school and believe that it is disrespectful if they do (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). There may be cultural issues that are in conflict with school's dress code or that prevent families from participating in school activities based on certain religious values and beliefs. In addition, parents may also encounter a lack of school support for diversity or negative attitudes by school staff toward families with diverse backgrounds and needs.

2.6.4 Socio-economic background

Poverty is rife in South Africa and can be a challenging aspect not only for the learners but for their parents as well. As a result parents from minority and poor socio-economic backgrounds feel that they have nothing to contribute, since they are labelled as being less interested in their children's schooling due to their circumstances (Decker et al., 2007). Parental involvement in education can have many advantages but parents living in poverty are less likely to be involved in school related activities than parents who come from a more middle class family (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). If there is no money to cover their daily expenses, then parents won't have the funds to support certain school functions because they simply cannot afford to. Work commitments often prevent low-income parents from making time for their children's schooling.

Van Velsor and Orozco (2007) also believe that low-income parents encounter both demographic and psychological barriers to parental involvement that can be associated with educator's attitudes and school climate. Educators may influence the involvement of low-income parents in several ways. Some educators do not value the opinions of these parents and make negative judgements about low-income parents' lack of involvement (Konzal, 2001; Ramirez, 1999). These negative attitudes by educators towards low-income families may lead to sub-standard treatment of parents as compared to parents who are in a higher income bracket (Hill & Taylor, 2004). These authors also reiterate that schools in poor socio-economic communities are less likely to encourage parental school involvement than those in more affluent communities. It is important for the school to know the community they serve because the needs of low-income families are totally different to higher income families. Lower-income parents often struggle to provide their families with all the basic necessities that support a comfortable lifestyle. It is assumed that when low-income families' basic needs are met then their involvement at school also increases (Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007).

2.6.5 Parents' educational level



A number of people in South Africa are still regarded as illiterate because they are unable to read and write (Hugo, Le Roux, Muller & Nel, 2005). According to Strauss and Burger (2000) parental literacy levels can influence a learner's academic performance in a negative manner. These authors found that nearly half of the parent sample in their study never completed primary school education. As a result these parents felt incompetent to assist their children with homework activities and refrained from becoming involved in school related activities. Parents may also be unsure how to assist with homework and may not engage in helping their children because they lack the knowledge and confidence to do so (Amatea & West-Olattunji, 2007). These authors also believe that parents are seen by the school as being disinterested and not caring about their children's education when in reality the parents doubt their own abilities to offer assistance.

2.7 Factors that can improve parental involvement in their children's schooling

Improving parental involvement at schools is one of the most challenging tasks encountered in the educational field today (Mncube, 2009). Teaching at a primary school for the past twenty four years, I have often heard educators say that the school offers wonderful events, but the family support is limited. In trying to determine the reason for a lack of involvement, researchers have uncovered one underlying problem: schools don't have an idea what parent involvement really entails (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004; McNeal, 2012). A brief discussion of some of the factors that can improve parental involvement follows:

2.7.1 Home-school relationship

It is a known fact that children learn best when the adults in their lives, namely their parents, educators and community members work together to encourage and support them (McCormack & Paratore, 2005). This basic concept should be a guideline about how schools should be organised when educating children. The school on its own cannot cater for all the child's developmental needs and therefore the meaningful involvement of the parents and the community are essential. The need to create a strong partnership between the home and the school is necessary in order to educate our children. This relationship must be maintained by both the parents and the educators so that the learners can understand that they must uphold the same standards at home and at school (Dhingra, Manhas & Sethi, 2007).

In today's modern society there is a belief that the school should stick to teaching academics and the home is a place where children acquire morals and values. However, one must realise that both the school and the home are places that promote teaching and learning (Simon & Epstein, 2001). All the experiences children encounter at home and at school help shape them into the adults they will become. Therefore it is essential to build a strong relationship between the home and the school so that parents feel welcome as full partners in the educational process. The parents on the other hand must make the commitment to support their children in school and at home. Motivating learners to do their school work and providing homework assistance can improve the learners' academic work ethic (Callahan, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005). A

good relationship between the home and the school ensures that both institutions are responsive to the learners' needs and cater for the child's overall development. The more welcome parents feel at school and the easier the school makes it for the parents to be involved, the more likely the parents are to be involved. One way to increase parental involvement in the school is to encourage parents to do voluntary work. By volunteering, parents can observe their children in their school environment and this in turn demonstrates to their children that their parents place great value on education.

2.7.2 Parents' understanding of their roles in their children's education

Parental involvement and decisions are based on different sources formulated from their own personal experiences according to Hoover – Dempsey and Sandler (1997). These authors suggest that a parent's decision to become involved in their children's education is a result of the following three reasons:

- The parent's beliefs about their role in their children's education. The decision of a parent to take part in their children's educational life can be associated with intrinsic parenting skills because they have the desire for their children to succeed. This basically means that parental role construction is seen as the parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education.
- The parent's senses of efficacy for helping their children succeed at school. This depends on the parent's ability to provide assistance based on the skills they possess.
- The family's life context that facilitate or hinders their ability to become involved. This refers to whether the school and the child created an opportunity for the parent to be involved.

Based on the above reasons that influence parental involvement, it is evident that parents become involved in their children's education because they have developed a parental role and feel responsible to contribute towards their children's education. They have a positive sense of efficacy for assisting their children succeed because they have the self-belief that they are sufficiently competent to help their children with their school work. The parents' sense of self-efficacy can be regarded as another important factor that influences parental involvement. The

self-efficacy theory suggests that parents will direct their actions in such a way that they consider the outcome of their involvement beforehand. Parents with a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to set higher goals for themselves as well as for their children as in comparison to parents with a low sense of self-efficacy who tend to believe that they are unable to assist their children when it comes to more challenging school related tasks (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

2.7.3 Positive communication between home and school

An unwelcome school environment can discourage parents from getting involved in certain school activities and there are many steps the school can take to promote parental involvement. The school must create an environment that is warm, caring, inviting and receptive to their parent body. Communication can be considered the key element to creating a welcoming atmosphere at school and thus bridging the gap between the home and the school (Richardson, 2009).

Educators should try and encourage positive interactions between themselves and the parents. In order to promote this positive interaction they need to maintain a friendly attitude when interacting with the parent body (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Parental involvement naturally increases when educators communicate with parents in a positive manner. Positive communication does not only promote parental involvement but it also improves the relationship between the educator and the parents. Educators have the ability to increase the parents' self-efficacy by communicating with parents about positive parent assistance at home that benefits their children. This in turn will encourage the parents to be more involved in their children's school related activities. Gillander, McKinney & Ritchie, (2012) confirm that when educators communicate to parents that the assistance given by them (parents) has positively improved their children's achievements, then they are more likely to continue assisting their children with other school related tasks.

2.8 Parental involvement in the different phases of their children's schooling

Parental involvement can be regarded as the unique and essential element of effective education that starts the moment a child is born and continues throughout the child's schooling career

(Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parental involvement in their children's primary school years is important to this study because it, *inter alia*, looks at how the different levels of involvement change as learner's progress from one phase to the next. This section deals with child development and age-appropriate parental involvement. It also attempts to explain how the transitioning from foundation phase to senior phase at a primary school is relevant to the study.

It is only natural to assume that both parents and children play an important role in parental involvement (Krause & Haverkamp, 1996). The developmental considerations of the learners are extremely important with regard to educational parameters and will be taken into account in this study. The learner participants in this study were divided into two groups namely: the foundation phase group whose ages were from 8 to 10 years and the senior phase group whose ages ranged from 12 to 14 years. All children acquire knowledge during different developmental stages during their life and I thought it best to incorporate Erikson's theory into my explanation because in each stage the learners are required to master a new challenge. Once the learners have mastered a challenge, they gain a set of skills and if they do not realise certain challenges certain consequences can be predetermined in the individual, however these skills can be acquired in other developmental stages as well (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010).

In order to study the various development stages of children, Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development has been valued by many (Didier, 2014). The theory is based on eight developmental stages, namely: infancy (trust vs mistrust), toddler (autonomy vs. shame), early childhood (initiation vs. guilt), and school age child (industry vs inferiority), adolescence (ego identity vs. role confusion), young adulthood (intimacy vs. isolation), middle adulthood (generativity vs, stagnation) and late adulthood (ego integrity vs. despair).

Erikson's school age child and adolescence stage of development applies to the learner participants in this study. During the school age stage the child is exposed to new academic and social skills which are important for the child's educational development. The foundation phase in South Africa is regarded as being inclusive of grade R to grade 3 which provides formal education for children usually in the age band of five to nine year olds. Once the learners have completed their foundation phase education they move on to the intermediate phase which

extends over a period of three years, namely; grade 4 to 6 (Western Cape Educational Department [WCED], School Curriculum, Grades R to 12, 2012). During the school age phase (aged 5 to 12 years) most children will learn to read, write and do mathematical sums. It is during this stage that parents need to tap into the child's personal being by using encouragement and reinforcement. Parental involvement during this stage of development is crucial because if the learners experience unresolved feelings of inferiority they are bound to encounter serious problems in terms of their competency ability. In this phase children begin to feel industrious and develop a feeling of confidence about their ability to achieve their goals. If this initiation is not nurtured and developed but restricted by parents, then the child will develop a sense of inferiority about their potential. Success during this stage is critical when developing a sense of competency in children and all parents need to be aware of this phenomenon (Donald *et al.*, 2010).

Once the learners complete the intermediate phase they proceed to grade seven, the beginning of the senior phase and usually marking their entry into the adolescent phase of development. Adolescence can be defined as “the developmental stage occurring from puberty until adulthood, approximately between the ages of 12 to 18 years for females and 13 to 21 years for males” (Plug, Louw, Gouws & Meyer, 1997, p. 7). During this developmental stage the child is constantly going through different types of changes such as physical, emotional, cognitive and social changes. Change can be regarded as one of the most important characteristics of this stage (Andrews & Bishop, 2012; Moretti & Peled, 2004). Researchers generally view adolescence as a sensitive developmental phase because of the changes occurring on different domains: biological, cognitive, changes in self-understanding as well as the changes in the social relationships with peers and parents (McGill, Hughes, Alicea & Way, 2012).

The transition from one phase to another phase is a normal movement in the educational field. In South Africa, children progress to the senior phase at a primary school round about the age of 12 or 13 years. The transition from the intermediate phase to the senior phase coincides with adolescence and this can be considered a very difficult time for learners and parents. According to Soares, Lemos and Almeida (2005) the developmental changes in adolescence can affect the learner's cognitive and emotional development which can influence the learner's academic achievement. Adolescence can be regarded as the fifth developmental stage in which the

individual struggles to find their own identity and during this trying time of development the adolescent seeks emancipation from their parents.

The parent participants in this study fell into the middle and late adulthood phase of Erikson's developmental stages. These parents are also faced with different challenges because they need to cope with changes taking place in their own lives as well as having to contend with their teenagers' developmental journey. The parents need to display qualities of patience and understanding in order for the adolescent to feel supported and understood. The adolescent regards their social identity as an important factor and greater distance is created within their family structure (Brewin & Statham, 2011). Didier (2014) explains that the adolescents need for autonomy is greater during this phase and they have the tendency to retaliate against parental control during this stage which could have an impact on the child-parent relationship, which in turn could have an effect on parental involvement. According to Chen and Gregory (2009) the most effective parental involvement during adolescence would be developmentally appropriate assistance that will ensure educational success at school. Some parent involvement automatically decreases around the time their children enter high school because they believe their children should develop some form of independence (Griffin & Galassi, 2010). Cooper, Linsay and Nye (2000) concur and stipulate that parental involvement can only be beneficial to the learners if the parents adapt their involvement to accommodate their children's competence, experiences and current age. While the adolescent is experiencing various developmental changes the parent-child relationship is also undergoing different changes.

Various studies collaborate the notion that parental involvement in their children's education declines as the children become older (Sirvani, 2007; Richardson, 2009). Senler and Sungur (2009) concur and believe that primary school parents are more likely to be involved with their children's education than high school parents. According to research conducted, during the years 1996 and 1999, 86% of parents with children in primary schools in America had at least one parent meeting per year with their children's teacher in comparison to the 50% of secondary schools (Sirvani, 2007).

The pattern of diminishing parental involvement in their children's schooling as the children get older is found across different racial groups. For example, Hill and Craft (2003) found that both African American and Euro-American parents tend to be more involved during their children's early school years compared to their secondary schooling. However, these authors also reported exceptions to the trend of diminishing parental involvement as their children get older. For example, parents are likely to become involved in their children's education if they were informed of poor academic achievement. Poor grades or percentages can be regarded as a motivational factor for parents to become involved.

2.9 Models of parental involvement

Research has confirmed that there are different forms of parenting practices associated with positive educational outcomes and social competencies. These practices may vary from volunteering, provision of home support, participation in school boards or council and attending parent information evenings (Hoover-Demsey & Sandler, 1997). At the same time, several models of classification of parental involvement have been developed over the years. These include Gordon's systems approach, Comer School Development Programme (SDP) and Swaps school-to-home model. The two most frequently cited models in the United States of America, are Epstein's typology of school-family-community partnership (which offers a comprehensive parental involvement framework) and Comer School Development Programme. These models demonstrate the different types and levels of participation, and also the factors that enhance partnerships and have shown success in improving schools and children's education and development through family-school-community partnerships (Barbour, Barbour & Scully, 2007). A brief overview of the Comer School Developmental Model, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model and Epstein's Model of parental involvement will follow.

2.9.1 Comer School Development Model

This School Development Programme (SDP) was developed by child psychiatrist Dr J. P. Comer and his colleagues in collaboration with the New Haven Public Schools, USA. The model is a response to the way that multiple social environments or contexts interact in order to influence

the development of children and has become a highly recognised model for involving parents and is copied throughout the USA, South Africa, England and other countries (Barbour et al., 2007).

Comer (2001) believes that in order to realise the full potential of schools and learners, educators must have thorough knowledge of how children develop socially, emotionally, physically and academically; know how to guide that development; be able to interact with the families of learners, the institutions and the community that will benefit the learners growth in school and society.

The SDP developed a framework known as The SDP Framework for Change with their motto being based on the emphasis of building relationships among parents, educators and learners (Guhn, 2008). Comer (2005) explains that this framework is based on the theory that a learner's academic achievement, behaviour and preparation for school can be influenced when the adult stakeholders work together in a meaningful and cooperative manner in order to promote academic learning. Furthermore, he maintains that these conceptual and operational frameworks create conditions that allow the adults the opportunity to support the development of their children. Comer observed that children's behaviours are influenced by their surroundings and that they need to have positive relationships in order to develop holistically (physically, socially and emotionally.) The child-centred environment is developed through planning and through the collaboration of professionals with the community.

The SDP views parental involvement as the most important factor for success in developing a school environment that caters for the overall development of its learners (Comer & Joyner, 2004). Thus, understanding parents and addressing parent development are also important components of this model seeing that the parents and educators must work together as a team in order to maintain a balanced relationship between the home and school (Comer, 2005).

Comer (2001, p.174) also emphasises the school's responsibility to initiate the partnership between school and family by stating that:

The school is the pathway for all children - the only place where a significant number of adults are working with young people in a way that enables them to call on family and community resources in order to support growth systematically and continually.

2.9.2 The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model

This model can be seen as a theoretical framework that enables a researcher to formulate and examine predictors of parental involvement. It stipulates that three major sources for involvement can be identified namely; the parents' motivational beliefs which include parental role construction and parental self-efficacy for encouraging learners to achieve better results, parent's perceptions with regard to being invited to assist by the school, educators and learners and the personal life context of the parents. The latter refers to the parents' skills and knowledge about helping their children (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005).

Role construction refers to the way parents construct their roles as parents with regards to their children's education. Some parents may have a passive approach to their role and believe that their children's education is in the hand of the school and the education department. On the other hand, some parents consider themselves as being an integral part of their children's education. Parental efficacy can be regarded as the means of how effective parents believe they are in terms of assisting their children at school. The construct of "school invitingness" promotes the idea that schools actually invite parents to be involved in their children's school life. Parents are willing to become involved in school related activities if they believe that they possess the skills and knowledge for that type of involvement (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005). Parental involvement is also influenced by family and work responsibilities that demand their energy and time. Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues conclude that parents often seek opportunities for involvement if it fits in with their life-context and if the parents perceive that the involvement will help their children to learn. Some features of this model overlap with those of the Comer model.

If parental involvement can help improve children's academic achievement, a psychological theory of the concept of involvement must also recognise the reason why this involvement can be an advantage to a child's success at school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (1997) has three primary mechanisms through which parents can influence their children's educational outcomes. These influences are: modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction. The modeling mechanism suggests that children will imitate their parents' behaviour. This can be achieved by

parents spending quality time with their children through engagement in valuable school- related activities. One possible positive outcome of such engagement is the fact that children will progress well at school. Through reinforcement, parents give their children interest, attention, praise and rewards for positive behaviours that ultimately lead to school success. If these psychological incentives are regarded as important characteristic by the learner; they are likely to increase the learner's desire to behave in a manner that leads to school success. Finally, parents can have an effect on their children's educational outcomes by direct instruction. The theory stipulates that children whose parents are involved in their education will more likely develop a positive sense of efficacy for attaining good results in school-related tasks than those children whose parents who show no interest (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, (2005) suggested that schools take steps to: encourage parental role construction and self-efficacy for assisting children to learn, support school activities and initiate parent-teacher involvement. On the whole this model can be considered a reliable framework for understanding what encourages and motivates parents to be involved in their children's academic careers. This model emphasises that the school's social context, especially parents' relationship with their children and educators, rather than the parents' socio-economic status, influence their decisions about becoming involved in their children's education. Therefore, the school's actions may escalate the parents' motivation to be involved. At the same time, however, schools' negative actions may compromise the parents' motivation for involvement (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005).

2.9.3 Epstein's model of parental involvement in their children's schooling.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence which was based on Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979).

The ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner looks at how the child develops relationships within the context of their own environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory believes that different "layers" of the environment, affects the child's development in a specific way. In recent years this theory was renamed the "bio-ecological systems theory" to show that a child's own biological make up and

environment has the ability to influence their development. The interaction between various factors such as the child's biological structure, immediate family and environment directs his/her development in a positive or negative direction. An imbalance due to conflict in any one of the layers will cause a rippling effect in other layers. In order to study the child's development in totality, we must look at the child, the immediate environment and also the interaction of the child with the environment. This theory can be related directly to education and it encourages schools and educators to establish long-term relationships with their parent body (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner believes that the primary relationship must be formed by a person within the immediate sphere of the child's influence. Schools and educators fulfill an important secondary role, but cannot be replaced by the learner's primary caregiver. It is therefore the duty of the school and an educator to support the primary relationship between the parent and the child so that a suitable environment is created that encourages family values. Bronfenbrenner would also agree that we should preserve societal attitudes and values that promote family unity.

Expanding on Bronfenbrenner theory, Epstein's theory emphasises that an integrated relationship between the parents, educators and community needs to exist so that valuable contributions can be made towards learner development (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). In Epstein's opinion, the most important factor in the partnership of child development in education is that both parents and educators are aware of each other's roles. She believes that through their interactions, all relevant role players will contribute to a positive learning experience. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence has mainly been used to assess school and district programmes of family involvement (Conrad & Serlin, 2006).

Epstein's theoretical model of the overlapping spheres of influence shows how the home, the school and the community interact in an integrated manner in order to promote child and adolescent learning and development. It emphasises that learners are best supported when their families and school have common goals and when they work together to achieve them. The school is placed in the centre and is seen as a mediator for initiating and maintaining the partnership (Barbour *et al.*, 2007).

This model possesses external and internal structures. The external structure of this model identifies three major contexts in which children develop and they are: the family, the school and the community. These three are independent institutions and spheres of influence which can overlap to a greater or lesser degree (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004). By working together, the family and schools spheres of influence overlap, which in turn increases communication and collaboration. If the school, families and communities don't collaborate, these spheres are pulled apart. Traditionally, as learners get older, the spheres of influence are more likely to be pulled apart if the parents feel they are unable to support their children (Simon & Epstein, 2001). Epstein and Sanders (2006) identified key factors that could affect the nature and extent of the connections and these include the learner's age, their grade levels, family, school, community backgrounds, philosophies, experiences and opportunities.

This model also has an internal structure that relates to the interpersonal relationships between parents, learners, educators and the community (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). These exchanges may occur at an institutional level (e.g. when schools invite families or community groups to an event) and at the individual level (e.g. when an educator and parent discuss a learner). The internal structure sets the learner at the centre of the model as the main actor in learning and as the reason why parents and educators communicate (Simon & Epstein, 2001).

According to Epstein, (2001) academic learning and social development are influenced by the child, the school and the family. Simon and Epstein (2001) further assert that if successful, the interactions and social ties developed among partners in education will generate social capital that may be used to benefit learners, families, schools and the community. The combined endeavour of parents and educators pushes the spheres of family and school influence together and the increased interaction between parents and schools result in family-like schools and school-like families (Lemmer, 2004).

In family-like schools educators welcome parents and community partners and treat each learner as an individual, making them feel special and included. Communities are also responsible for creating family-like settings, services and events so that families are able to support their children (Barbour *et al.*, 2007). On the other hand, in school-like families it is the role of the parent to

guide their children to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as learners (Epstein, 2001). The parents emphasise the importance of school, homework completion and the activities that leads to academic success (Barbour *et al.*, 2007).

In conclusion, the model of overlapping spheres suggests that mutual interests of families and schools can be successfully promoted by frequent cooperative efforts and clear, close communication between parents and educators through using policies and a comprehensive programme of many important types of parental involvement (Epstein, 2001). Epstein's typology of the school-family-community partnership is a framework that provides six ways of involving parents which educators may use as guidelines for developing programmes that offer opportunities for family and community participation in their schools. They are based on the theoretical model of overlapping spheres of influence. The first five propositions relate to parent and family involvement while the sixth relates to the collaboration with the community. Each of the six types of involvement (discussed below) consists of many activities that promote or enhance partnership. This means that, as they make plans for the upcoming year, educators could integrate into their educational programmes any of these activities. However, Epstein and Sanders (2006) warn that each type of involvement poses specific challenges that must be addressed in order for schools to reach out to and become partners with all families, including those whose first language is not English (the dominant language medium of the school), single-parent families, low income families, and other families with whom schools traditionally have had limited interaction. They further indicate that activities for the six types of involvement lead to different results and challenges for learners, families, schools, and the community. Thus, each school must be aware of the local needs of its families and children while designing its own parental involvement programme (Olsen & Fuller, 2008).

Epstein's typology is based on different research findings from various studies of what factors contribute to children's education in the most effective way (Epstein *et al.*, 2009). The six factors proposed by Epstein are: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. Parenting refers to assisting all families with the understanding of the development of both the child and the adolescent. It also helps in creating a supportive home environment that is conducive for learning. Communicating refers to how one

can establish an effective two-way communication system. This system will aid parents with monitoring their children's progress (Epstein, 2008).

Volunteering refers to recruiting parents to assist and support with school fundraising functions and activities. Learning at home provides parents with ideas and methods they can implement at home with regard to homework and curricular assistance (Epstein, 2008).

Decision-making refers to incorporating the parent body into important school related decisions. Lastly, collaborating with the community refers to identifying resourceful community services that will aid in developing the school (Epstein, 2008).

Every factor can lead to different results for learners, parents, educators, school and community. Additionally, each factor can interact with each other on different levels to create a variety of partnerships. Finally, each factor is associated with its own challenges on how to involve all family members and those challenges must be met. Epstein *et al.*, (2009) therefore considers it important for individual schools to choose factors that are likely to assist them in achieving their goals for academic success and to develop a close bond between the home and the school.

Even though the core focus of these six factors is to enhance academic performance, they also contribute to different results for both parents and educators (Epstein *et al.*, 2009). According to Henderson and Berla (1994), parents will develop a positive attitude towards the school and its staff members and be more confident when helping their children with their homework activities by being involved with their education. For educators, the benefits may be a better communication link with parents and a better understanding of the learner's family structure (Epstein, 2004). Henderson and Berla (1994) also contend that the school will benefit by parental involvement because there will be a boost in the educators morale, more family support and better academic results. In support of this statement, Clark (2007) suggests that schools operate more effectively when the parent body and the community take ownership of the school. Therefore, one can conclude that these six factors are beneficial to the learners, parents, educators and the school.

2.10 Conclusion

The literature review in this chapter offers some insight into the roles that parents can play in the education of their children. The literature review revealed some factors that influence parental involvement and how it plays a critical role in the child's academic achievement. Parental involvement in their children's schooling was discussed in terms of its various definitions, the legal obligations of parents towards their children's education, parental involvement and academic outcomes, parental involvement and non-academic outcomes, barriers to parental involvement in their children's schooling, factors that can improve parental involvement in their children's schooling, parental involvement in the different phases of their children's schooling, and theoretical models of conceptualising parental involvement. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence serves as the theoretical framework of the study. The following chapter deals with the research findings in relation to the data.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the role parents play in the academic achievement of primary school learners. This chapter provides an insight into the research methodology used in this study. All researchers come from different backgrounds, have different beliefs systems and therefore they view and interact with their environment from different perspectives. As a result, the way in which research studies are approached may differ because there are certain standards and rules that all researchers must adhere too. These standards or principles can be referred to as a paradigm (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2001). This chapter states this study's research question and sub- questions. It then discusses the research paradigm, research approach, research design, the study population and sampling, the data collection methods employed, the analysis of data, trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research question and sub-questions

The main research question that this study hoped to answer was the following:

What role does parental involvement play in the academic achievement of primary school learners?

The following sub-questions are relevant to the study:

- How does parental involvement influence academic achievement of their children?
- What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's academic achievement?
- Which factors enhance and hinder parental involvement across the phases of primary schooling?
- How does parental involvement in children's academic progress change over time as learners' progress through the primary schooling phase?

3.3 Research paradigm

A paradigm can be regarded as a belief system or theory that governs the way the researcher approach his/her research task and helps to establish a set of practices to create parameters whereby researchers are able to work within. There are various definitions and descriptions of a research paradigm. Guba (1990) defines a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that guide action. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) believe that the notion of a paradigm encompasses epistemology and ontology. Epistemology epitomises how we know the world and ontology focuses on the nature of reality and methodology, thus zooming in on how we gain knowledge about the world. Usher (1996) states that, epistemological and ontological questions are interconnected with each other and tries to clarify the notion of what exists may be known. Taylor, Kermode and Roberts (2007) are of the opinion that a paradigm can be considered a broad view or perspective of something. Weaver and Olson's (2006,p.460) definition of a paradigm reveals how research could be affected and guided by a certain paradigm by stating that, "paradigms are patterns or beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished." There are a number of paradigms such as the: positivist, post-positivist, critical, constructivist and the interpretivist paradigm. A brief explanation of each will be discussed.

The assumptions and beliefs of the positivist paradigm with regard to ontology assume that there are real objects in the world apart from the human knower. In other words, there is an objective reality. When one speaks about representational epistemology, the researcher naturally comes to the conclusion that people know this reality and use visual impressions to accurately describe and explain this phenomenon. By positing a reality separate from our knowledge of it means divorcing the subject and object from each other, the positivist paradigm provides an objective reality against which researchers can compare their claims and measure their truth in order to justify their findings (Guba & Lincoln, 2006; Collins, 2010). This can be achieved by linking it to the following assumptions of prediction and control which assumes that there are general patterns of cause and effect used as a basis for predicting and controlling natural phenomenon. The main aim is to discover these patterns so that assumptions can be drawn and compared to each other. Empirical verification on the other hand assumes that we can rely on our

perceptions of the world to provide us with accurate data. Every researcher adopts the opinion that their research will be value-free. If strict guidelines and procedures are followed, the research will be free of subjective bias and ultimately the goal of objectivity is achieved.

The positivist paradigm includes quantitative methodology, making use of experimental methods and control groups with the administration of pre-and post- tests to measure the scores which were obtained. The researcher can be regarded as being external to the research site and is in control of the procedure.

Willis (2007) describes post-positivism as a milder form of positivism that shares similar principles but allows more interaction between the researcher and the research participants. It uses additional methods such as survey research and qualitative methods such as interviewing and participant-observation (Creswell, 2003). According to Kincheloe and McLaren (2002), critical theory is concerned with the power and justice of several issues in society such as economy, race, gender and education. The critical theorist view entails the power of social politics and ideologies that influence the educational research. This paradigm relates to the “political agenda and that the task of the researchers is not to be dispassionate, disinterested, and objective” (Morrison cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001, p. 28).

The fundamental assumptions guiding the constructivist paradigm are that knowledge is socially constructed by people who are active in the research process. For this reason the researchers should attempt to understand the world of ‘lived’ experience from the perspective of those who live it (Schwandt, 2000). The constructivist paradigm stipulates that research is the end result of the values of researchers and not an isolated entity. Constructivists believe that reality is constructed and formulated in the mind of the individual, and not an isolated entity. Ponterotto (2005) argues that the meaning is not visible at face value and must be extracted through deep reflection, which can be attained when the researcher and participants interacts with each other.

Henning (2004) is of the opinion that the main focus of the interpretive paradigm is on experience and interpretation. Therefore, one must bear in mind that in research the constructivist is also referred to as interpretivist. It is concerned with meaning and it seeks to uncover the way

members of society understand given situations thus producing descriptive analysis that emphasize deep understanding of the social occurrences (Henning, 2004).

This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm which insists that the world should be studied in its natural state rather than in a controlled environment with minimum intervention by a researcher (Cohen, 2000). Reality is a construct that is created by the human mind and therefore people may perceive and understand the world in similar ways but at the same time show some degree of differentiation. The interpretive researcher cannot fathom the idea of there being a reality “out there” which exists irrespective of people (Bassey, 1999). In terms of the interpretivist paradigm, the nature of reality (ontology) can be regarded as being socially constructed by each individual as a result of diverse interpretations and realities of a singular event (Merriam,2009).

In terms of the nature of scientific knowledge (epistemology), the interpretivist paradigm relies on multiple realities in order to formulate knowledge. Maree (2007) refers to the subjective nature of reality that exists in questioning reality as a method of formulating interpretations which can be attached to various occurrences in people’s lives. Every individual is responsible for creating their own reality and therefore there are different perceptions connected to it. Observers are naturally part of the world, which they are observing and may change it because they have a pre-conceived idea of what they regard as socially acceptable or not. From an interpretivist perspective reality is socially constructed and what we know is always negotiated within cultures, social settings and our relationships with other people. From this perspective, validity or truth cannot be embedded in an objective reality. What is believed to be valid or true is negotiable and there can be various valid claims to knowledge (Merriam, 2009).

The interpretative researcher is aware that rationality is optional and accepts that when two observers communicate the world may not seem rational or make sense (Bassey, 1999). The interpretative researcher sees language as a more or less agreed upon symbolic system in which different people may have more differences in their meanings (Merriam, 2009).

According to Cohen (2000) the situation that is not controlled by the researcher gives the interviewees the freedom to express their views and opinions on the question without

intervention. Neuman (2006) also shares the same view that an interpretive paradigm wants to learn what is meaningful to the people being investigated and how individuals experience everyday life. By creating a reality that cannot separate the subject and object from each other, the interpretivist paradigm posits that researchers' values are internalised in all phases of the research process. Truth is established through dialogue and the interpretivists share the following beliefs about the nature of reality (Angen, 2000):

- Findings are formulated as the investigation progresses. That is, findings are created through dialogue in which conflicting interpretations are debated amongst members of a community.
- Pragmatic and moral issues are important considerations when evaluating interpretive science. Creating a dialogue between researcher and respondent is an important factor because it helps to establish a relationship between the two parties. It is through this communicative process that an understanding of the social world can be created in order to make sense of reality.
- All interpretations are based on a moment in time in a particular context or situation and can be re-interpreted through conversation.

The interpretivist paradigm is relevant to my study which investigated the experiences and perceptions of parents with regard to their involvement or lack thereof in the development of their children's academic achievement. The interpretivist paradigm enabled me as a researcher to explore the views and interpretations of the people I studied and created an understanding through their eyes. Since the research question in this study requires understanding of the problem from the perspective of those involved, the study is located in the interpretive paradigm (Cohen, 2000).

In the context of this study each parent-child relationship would have its own unique configuration. Even though all the parents in this study are from poor socio-economic backgrounds, they had varied educational experiences and qualifications. Their personal

experiences of school as well as their knowledge about various subject materials would ultimately affect assistance with their children.

3.4 Research approach

In line with the interpretivist paradigm, the current study follows a qualitative research approach. Denzin & Lincoln (2000), argue that qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right involving an interpretive naturalistic approach. This means that qualitative researchers study in their natural settings attempting to make sense of an interpretive phenomenon in terms of meanings people bring to them. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painters (2006), qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language and therefore they are able to analyse the data. The researcher is in a better position to probe respondents with questions to clarify views and opinions given during the interview. They further explain that observations are recorded in the researcher's language and the data is analysed by identifying and categorising themes.

Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007) describes qualitative research as a systematic, empirical approach for answering questions about people in a specific social context which tries to understand the observed regularities in what people do, or what they report as their experience.

The term qualitative research, according to Denzin & Lincoln (2000) implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured. A qualitative researcher emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the respondents as well as the situational constraints that shape and formulate an inquiry. Qualitative researchers are concerned with concrete evidence and therefore collect their data on site. They believe the best way to understand and capture any behaviour is observation in its natural setting (Creswell, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) is convinced that such data is often called "soft data" since it is deeply rooted in the life of the person.

In qualitative research the researcher is the main instrument, collecting data and examining the individual's understanding of his or her reality. The emphasis is on the subjective view of the participant and such researchers demand a specific set of rules be followed even though they are not standardised. The particular methods of qualitative research can take on various forms and is dependent on the disciplines within which the research is found. All qualitative studies follow the same pattern by presenting findings in the form of written and verbal descriptions instead of a statistical format which is a characteristic of quantitative studies. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009).

In qualitative research the sample size is usually small to make it more manageable and therefore, generalisation from the sample over to the whole population is not possible. Generalisation is not the main aim of qualitative research, but rather to obtain a better understanding of the individual's experiences (Creswell, 2007). Like Bogdan and Biklen, (2003) claim, qualitative researchers look at findings as a small part of a bigger picture whereby individual research findings are generalized across the research domain. Individuals are seen as unique beings and therefore experience things differently and interpret their experiences and situations in different ways.

The qualitative methodology shares its philosophical foundation with the interpretivist paradigm by supporting the view that there are many truths and multiple realities. This type of paradigm focuses on the holistic perspective of the person as well as the environment which is more in line with the educational discipline (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2001). The interpretive paradigm is associated with methodological approaches that provide an opportunity for the research participants to verbalise opinions (Cole, 2006; Weaver & Olson, 2006). Cole (2006,p. 26) further argues that qualitative researchers are “more concerned about uncovering knowledge about how people feel and think in the circumstances in which they find themselves, than making judgements about whether those thoughts and feelings are valid.” The researcher views people's experiences in their context in a subjective manner. Thus, it is especially suitable to use qualitative approach when the researcher wants to gain a deep understanding of the individuals'

experiences, in their correct settings. With this approach the researcher gains an integral picture of peoples' lives, their experiences and encounters (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

3.4.1 Disadvantages/weaknesses of qualitative research

One of the major disadvantages of qualitative research is that the very subjectivity of the inquiry leads to difficulties establishing reliability and validity of the approaches and information. The researcher must at all times avoid a situation where leading suggestions for respondents are given. Other disadvantages or weaknesses of qualitative research according to Johnson (2006) include the following:

- All knowledge attained cannot be generalised to other people or other settings.
- It is generally more time consuming to collect the data when compared to quantitative research.
- Data analysis and transcribing can be a tedious task.
- The results can be more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases.

3.4.2 Advantages/strengths of qualitative research

According to Anderson (2010) qualitative researchers have been put under the spotlight for the overuse of interviews and focus groups at the expense of other methods. Qualitative research has numerous advantages when properly conducted and this notion is reaffirmed by Johnson (2003) who outlines the strengths of qualitative research. Some advantages relevant to this study:

- Data collected is based on the participants' own experiences.
- Useful for studying a few cases.
- Useful for describing complex phenomena
- Data are usually collected in naturalistic settings in qualitative research
- Qualitative approaches are especially responsive to local situations and conditions.

3.4.3 Application of qualitative research in this study

In this study an attempt was made to collect data by conducting interviews and administering questionnaires to the various participants. The outcome of these activities would provide qualitative data which can only be meaningful if the researcher identifies closely with them. In the context of this study, the researcher had the opportunity to meet the learners, parent and educator participants before doing the research. This enabled me to establish a relationship by clearly explaining the objectives, methods and outcomes of the study. The data generated were qualitative in nature which came from three sets of questionnaires (parents, learners and educators) and individual interviews with a few parents from the selected parent population. Therefore, one could agree that this level of study would fall into the interpretivist research paradigm because it relied heavily on naturalistic methods namely: interviews, questionnaires and analysis of documents. These methods ensured an adequate dialogue between researcher and participants were established which opened the doors to a meaningful reality (Neuman, 2006). McMillan & Schumacher (2001) state that qualitative research follows no direct rules; however, researchers are reminded that the research must not be approached in a haphazard fashion. Qualitative research should be conducted in a professional manner and it also demands a great amount of methodological knowledge coupled with intellectual competence. Since the study is interpretive, the most appropriate research design needed to gather data was a case study.

3.5 Research design

A case study is an approach to research that tries to gain relevant information about a specific topic or event at a specific time. Therefore, as Willig (2008) asserts, case studies are not characterised by the methods used to collect and analyse specific data. However, the concept of a case can be a complicated procedure because case studies have the tendency to be bounded in some discrete way. The argument about what constitutes a good case is debatable. For example, Stake (2000) argues that the topic of the case can be an individual, but not the means by which the individual engages in a particular practice.

Case studies allow the researcher to gather data through a variety of methods which includes: interviews, observations, audio and video data and document collection. The aim of collecting data through a variety of methods is to enhance the theory generating capabilities of the case and to strengthen the validity of the study or case. There is also discussion in the field about how much a researcher is part of any particular presentation of a case study, an effort to manage researcher subjectivity as well as to let the case speak for itself (Stake, 2000).

Some authors have distinguished case studies by their units of analysis; some researchers have proposed guidelines for designing and conducting case study research as an independent method. It is important to bear in mind that case study methods can at times resemble ethnographic methods with regard to their purposes and scope even though their disciplinary backgrounds are different (Stake, 2005). The main aim of case study research is to understand the complexity of a case in the most complete way possible and for this reason; case study research often involves the use of multiple methods for obtaining data (Merriam, 1998).

Gummeson, (2000) is of the opinion that a case study is an in-depth investigation into a specific and relatively minute area of interest that promotes the individuality of each case which flares up as a persuasive voice.

When being consistent with the above argument, Cohen (2007) states that a case study is an approach that uses in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon which can either be an individual person or an event. As a result of their directness, case studies incorporate data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaires and observation (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

In this study, I used the case study design to get in-depth information about the factors that influence parental involvement in the development of their children's academic achievement. This design revealed certain aspects of parent's behaviour and ideas that influence their involvement in the development of their children's academic success. The core characteristic of a case study lies in its unique descriptions and analysis of a single event or bounded system (Merriam, 1998). The nature of parental involvement which can be regarded as the studied

phenomenon is explored from the experiences and perceptions of grade 3 and 7 parents, learners and educators at a primary school, based in a suburb in Cape Town. The qualitative case study design could also be described as a psychological case study because the focus is on a small group of individual parents, learners and educators, with the aim of investigating an educational phenomenon or aspect of human behaviour (Merriam, 1998), namely parental involvement. Eighteen learners, ten parents (who were interviewed and completed a questionnaire) and four educators participated in the study.

Similar to a phenomenological design, the aim is to identify and explore the nature of parental involvement across the transition from the foundation phase to the senior phase at a primary school. However, using a case study design allowed the researcher to rule out certain contextual factors which influence parental involvement (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Such factors include the socio-economic status of the families, the nature of parents' occupations, income as well as the availability of resources. The case study design allowed the researcher to conduct the research in a bounded system in which all participants are in similar relation to these factors. For example, all my research participants were unemployed and did not have a fix income and all resided in the sub-economic area of Facticeon.

While conducting the study, prior research on parental involvement (which can be found in the literature review) was used to describe and develop specific categories and theoretical assumptions regarding the research and this was either challenged, supported or illustrated by the findings (Merriam, 1998) .Therefore, the study can be described as an interpretive case study because existing research and theories report on various aspects regarding the nature of parental involvement. Despite this, the ultimate aim of the researcher was to identify significant patterns of parental involvement fluctuating from foundation phase to senior phase at a primary school.

3.6. Population and sampling

3.6.1 Population

The study was conducted at a primary school in the Western Cape. For the purpose of this study, the participants were primary school parents, educators and learners in the Kensington /Factreton area, a suburb located in the Cape Metropole. The researcher used this particular school because it is a primary school that included the grades that were of interest to this study, namely grades R to 7. The school is also classified as a previously disadvantaged school in quintile 3 and is located in a sub-economic area where gangsterism and violence is prevalent. The school involved in the research has a learner population of more than 500 learners. Participants included in this study were four educators, eighteen learners and eighteen parents (ten were interviewed and eighteen completed a questionnaire which included the interview sample).

3.6.2 Sampling

Purposeful sampling as a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researchers judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative (Babbie,2008). Babbie further reiterates that the researcher has to make a decision regarding who or what should be sampled, the form the sample will take and the number of people to be sampled as long as that sample leads to greater clarity and to a deepening of the understanding of the study conducted. In this study the researcher purposefully selected a primary school situated in a disadvantaged community in the Cape Town area. Furthermore, I used five sample groups (two parent groups, two learner groups and one educator group) to be part of the study.

The sample for qualitative research is normally small and the researcher needs to use his or her expertise in order to obtain extensive information from each participant. Ideally, one should try to select a sample which is free from bias (Greenfield, 2002). However, with purposive sampling the researcher is aware that there may be inherent variation in the chosen population (Greenfield, 2002). The researcher tries to manipulate this condition by using subjective judgement to select a

Table 3.1 Sample groups and data collection methods used

Sample	Learners	Parents	Educators	Questionnaire	Interviews	Total
Group 1	Grade 3			Yes		9
Group 2	Grade 7			Yes		9
Group 3		Yes			Yes	10
Group 4		Yes		Yes		18
Group 5			Yes	Yes		4

sample that the researcher believes to be a representative of the population. It is believed that purposive sampling can lead to very good samples, however, the success of the research cannot be guaranteed. All methods of sampling will have their drawbacks and none of them are flawless. The success of purposive sampling depends on two assumptions:

- The research is able to identify the characteristics that influence variation.
- The selected sample will reflect the distribution of these characteristics (Greenfield, 2002).

In purposive sampling, information-rich cases are able to guide ones research in the proper direction because it enables issues of central importance to stand out (Cohen, 2007). In purposive sampling which is often a feature of qualitative research, the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of personal judgement (Cohen, 2007). In this way the researcher build up a sample that is satisfactory and suitable to the specific needs of the study.

From the five sample groups, eighteen learners (nine from grade 3 and nine from grade 7) comprised of the first and second group in the sample. Regarding the sample criteria, the learner participants, regardless of their gender, had to be grade 3 or 7 learners at the time of the study. The learner sample was purposefully selected based on their academic results which were found in the end of the year progress schedules. By scrutinizing the schedules from 2007 to 2014 the researcher was able to identify the grade 7 learners according to their academic abilities, namely weak, average and strong. The same procedure was followed for the grade 3 learners but only the 2013-2014 schedules were examined to determine the learner participants, given that they had only completed two previous grades prior to entering grade 3 in 2015 and were fairly new to the

grade. The researcher used the official Western Cape Education Department scale of achievement for scholastic progressions to categorise the learners into ability groups. Table 3.2 illustrates the ranking of learner participants' academic progress.

Table 3.2 Learner scholastic achievement categories

Achievement level (Rating code)	Achievement description	Percentage %	Academic Achievement Ranking
7	Outstanding achievement	80 – 100	Strong
6	Meritorious achievement	70 – 79	
5	Substantial achievement	60 – 69	Average
4	Adequate achievement	50 – 59	
3	Moderate achievement	40 – 49	
2	Elementary achievement	30 – 39	Weak
1	Not achieved	0 – 29	

After obtaining the necessary permission, participants were invited through official invitation letters and interviewed by the researcher on an individual basis at the school. There were two parent samples and the first group consisted of ten parents, five from grade 3 and five from grade 7. The second parent group comprised of eighteen parents (the ten parents from my interview group plus an additional eight parents). This group was responsible for completing the parent questionnaire which was designed after the completion of the parent interviews to strengthen the validity of the study (Appendix 7) and fortunately all were returned.

Current educators in the relevant phases were selected to form part of the study because they were able to provide the researcher with a wealth of information about parental involvement. Normally there are only two or three educators per grade. The total number of educators in the sample was four educators which consisted of three grade 3 educators and one grade 7 educator. Unfortunately the school only has one grade 7 class for 2015.

3.7 Data collection

Data collection can be regarded as an important facet of research. If incorrectly collected it could negatively impact on the study's outcome thereby rendering it null and void. Creswell (2007) describes data collection as a combination of inter-connected activities whose ultimate aim is to obtain authentic information to help answer emerging research questions. The first plan of action is to locate a suitable site containing the research participants. In this study I identified a previously disadvantaged school in quintile 3 as classified by the Western Cape Educational Department. All South African public ordinary schools are ranked according to a nationally determined poverty ranking scale. These rankings are used to determine the monetary allocation a school will receive from the state. The ranking system has five categories, called quintiles. Schools ranked as quintile one are located within the poorest communities, whilst quintile five schools are deemed to be the least poor.

Data collection is organised in such a manner to optimise the collection of information from a variety of sources. This enabled the researcher to create a complete picture of a specific area of interest that will provide direction in the study. Data collection approaches for qualitative research is normally administered on a one to one basis or in a group set up. Figure 3.1 illustrates the data collection process that was followed in gathering the research data.

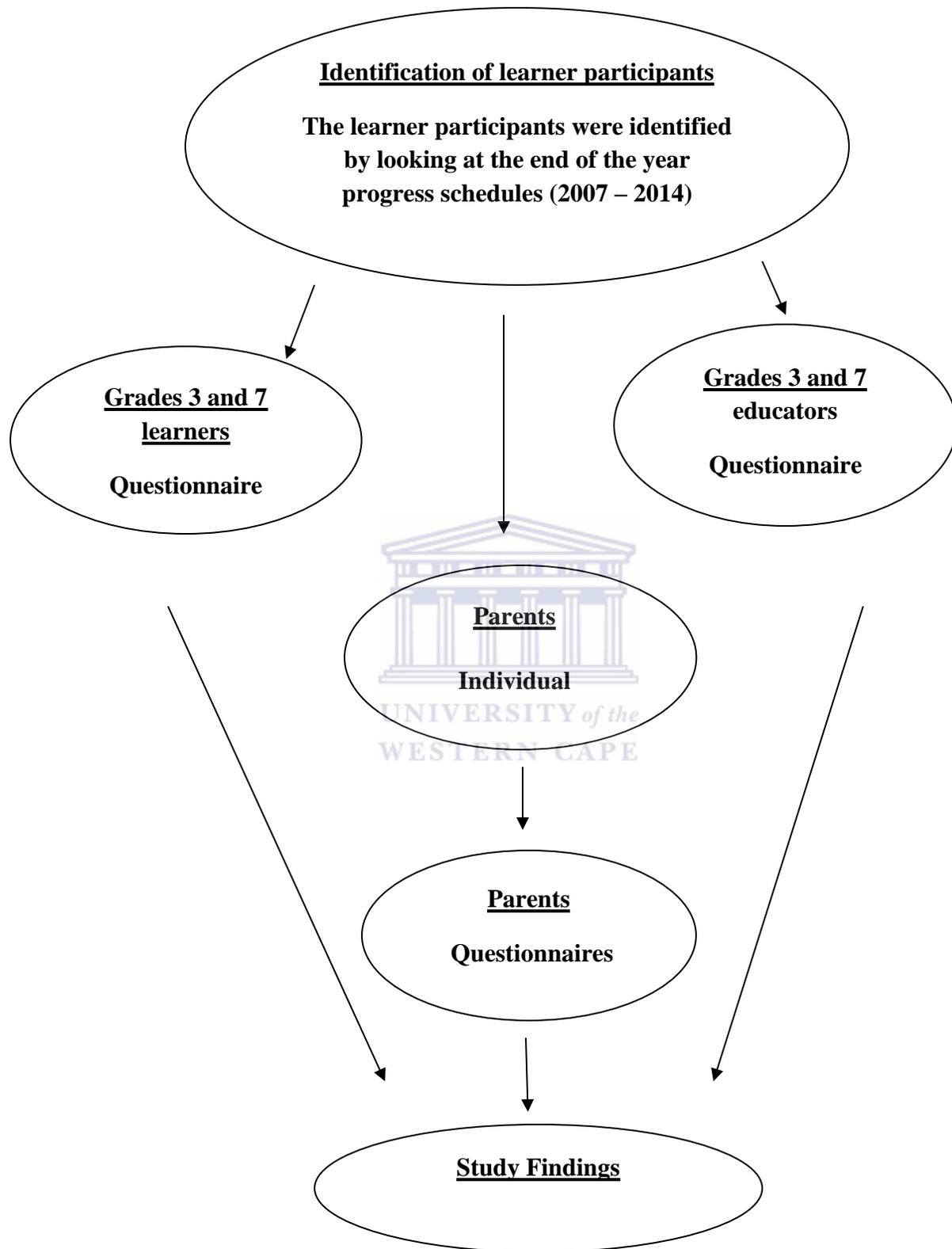


Figure 3.1 Data collection sequence

3.7.1 Data collection methods

3.7.1.1 Questionnaires

A well designed questionnaire is a set of questions given to a number of people usually to gather information or opinions about a specific topic. A questionnaire is not simply thrown together because a poorly designed questionnaire can invalidate any research results (De Vos, 2001). Questionnaires are regarded as the easiest way of collecting information from people and could be administered in a variety of situations. They could be used to either gather quantitative or qualitative data and they can also reduce interviewer bias because there are no verbal or visual clues that could influence the respondent to answer in a certain way (Robson, 2002).

Throughout the construction of the questionnaire I had to consider the characteristics of what constitutes a good questionnaire so that the requirements necessary for the research instrument would be realised and secure reliability. To ensure reliability of my questionnaire, the following guidelines by Schumacher and McMillan (1993) were considered:

- Make questions clear and avoid ambiguous items.
- Avoid double-barreled questions.
- Respondents must be competent to answer all the questions.
- Questions should be relevant to the topic.
- Simple terms are best to understand and easy to respond to.
- Avoid negative items.
- Avoid biased items or terms.

The objectives of the study could be realised if the questionnaires are designed to achieve the intended purpose of the study being conducted. Qualitative questionnaires are structured in such a way that they are able to reveal information about the respondent's beliefs, feelings and experiences. Good questionnaires are normally regarded as user friendly and allow the participants to express their opinions without interference from the interviewer. It is of the opinion that qualitative questionnaires are flexible to some degree and this enables the respondents to respond in their own words (Walonick, 1993).

Self-generated questionnaires guided by Epstein's framework were used to solicit data for this study. The researcher constructed three different questionnaires for the research participants and each one will be briefly discussed below:

a) Learner questionnaire (Appendix 8)

The questionnaire was created by the researcher who designed it to be learner friendly and also to generate the relevant data required for the study. To move away from ambiguous questions, I chose to use 'yes' and 'no' response questions in some parts of the learner questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions and only the last five were open-ended questions which required the learners to formulate their own opinion regarding their parent's assistance.

The questionnaire was administered to Grade 3 and 7 learners at school. In administering the instrument, the researcher read and explained each question on the instrument for the respondents so as to ensure that the respondents were cognisant of what was requested of them. The questionnaire was then collected and the data arranged and analysed using the thematic approach.

The learner questionnaire was administered to the learners by me in the staffroom (which was off limits to staff members during the process) at the designated school. The grade three and seven learner questionnaires were separately administered due to the age factor as well as their writing abilities. The staffroom was the ideal place to administer the questionnaire to both groups of learner participants because it was isolated and free from any disturbances. By making prior arrangements with the school principal I was able to set up the room beforehand. In this way I made sure the venue was stocked with the necessary stationery supplies required by the research participants. Pre-arranged time slots were organised with the principal and class educators who felt that the questionnaires should be administered during the middle session of the school day and not after school due to the gun shooting in the area. The middle session was normally reserved for Physical Education on the Astro -turf to not impede on the learners formal instructional time. An hour slot per group was needed to complete the questionnaire and all the questions were read to both groups of participants to ensure their understanding. Sufficient time was also given to all learners to write down their responses. After the completion of the

questionnaires I thanked all learner participants for partaking in the study and then escorted them back to class.

b) Parent questionnaire (Appendix 7)

The researcher issued one anonymous researcher-generated parent questionnaire to the parents of all eighteen learner participants at the primary school. Epstein's (2009) six types of parental involvement framework served as the basis for the questions contained on the questionnaire. Parent questionnaires were distributed to assess the varying levels of parent involvement, the ways in which parents choose to become involved in their child's school and whether they offered any homework assistance.

The questionnaire was created by the researcher who designed the first part to reveal some biographical information about the parents. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions which contained yes and no responses as well as a section that resembled a Likert Scale. The questionnaire used a 4-point scale instead of the Likert 5-point scale (Dawes, 2007). The researcher deliberately used the 4-point scale relating to home involvement so as to prevent the respondents from taking a neutral position. Likert scales in the questionnaire allowed respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale which specified the intensity of their feelings (Bryman, 2012). The self-administered questionnaire allowed for respondents to answer the questions at their own pace. This section of the questionnaire was therefore so structured that respondents had to take a deliberate position. The options to the questions included always, often, sometimes and never. The questionnaire consisted of five sections which were aimed at capturing data relating to the research topic. There were 41 items which were prepared to capture parents' views and opinions on parental involvement in relation to their children's academic achievement as they progress through the different phases at a primary school.

I created the parent questionnaire after I interviewed the 10 parent participants as an attempt to extend my exploration of parent participants' views of parental involvement and it helped strengthened the validity of my research. Data collected through the questionnaire was utilised to

further identify themes related to effective parental involvement strategies and perceptions of effective parental involvement. A total of 18 parent questionnaires were distributed across the two grades (nine in grade 3 and nine in grade 7). The questionnaires were sent via the learners to their parents in sealed envelopes. Fortunately all 18 were returned (an overall response rate of 100%). See Appendix 7 which is a sample copy of the parent questionnaire.

c) Educator questionnaires (Appendix 9)

The researcher constructed a questionnaire for the educators titled “Questionnaire to determine how parental involvement influences the child’s academic progress” which was guided by Epstein’s theoretical model of parental involvement. Educator questionnaires were distributed to four educators (three from grade 3 and one from grade 7) to assess the educators experience and knowledge about parental involvement. The educator questionnaires were given to these learners’ current grade 3 and 7 educators who knew their academic strengths and weaknesses as well as the degree their parents were involved in their education.

The questionnaires were divided into two sections. Section A consisted of biographical information and covered aspects such as: age, gender, home language and educational level. Section B consisted of parental involvement constructs and factors such as: parenting, communication and home and family support which were explored. Section B consisted of 24 open-ended questions and enough space was provided for the educators to jot down their responses.

The self-administered questionnaire allowed for respondents to answer the questions at their own pace in the pleasure of their homes. This section of the questionnaire was therefore so structured that respondents had the opportunity to voice their personal opinions regarding parental involvement and academic achievement. The questions that formed part of the questionnaire were designed to elicit educators’ perceptions of the phenomenon under study and included questions such as:

- “What is your understanding of the concept parental involvement in children’s education?”
- “What are the benefits of parental involvement?”

- “What challenges do you face as an educator with regard to parental involvement in their children’s schooling?”

3.7.1.2 Interviews

An interview can be regarded as an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee who usually engage in the interchange of views and opinions on a topic of mutual interest for production of knowledge (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). An interview is a research procedure that is utilised by researchers from a pool of survey methods in social research. A research interview has been defined as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by the researcher on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation (Seidman, 2006).

Individual semi-structured interviews were used in respect of the parent population with the view of establishing their understanding of parental involvement, its benefits and how they promoted it at their homes. A semi-structured interview guide with six broad themes, based on Epstein’s framework of parental involvement was developed and used by the researcher. The themes, aimed at answering the research questions were divided into the following categories: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. Through these themes the researcher aimed to identify factors linked to parental involvement at a primary school and hoped to gather enough information from them to form a deeper understanding of how the transition from one phase to another influences the level of involvement (Gniewosz, Eccles & Noack, 2012).

Through the semi-structured interviews the researcher addressed the following study questions:

- Which factors facilitate and hinder parental involvement across the phases?
- What role do parents play in the development of their children’s academic achievement?

I deliberately used interviews because they gave respondents a chance to articulate their stories and they possess the following advantages identified by Anderson and Arsenault (1998):

- It is assumed that people feel more comfortable to engage in an interview than in completing a questionnaire.
- The interviewer is part of the process and is able to clarify questions and probe for answers of the respondent.
- During the interviewing session the interviewer is able to observe non-verbal traits such as facial expressions, tones of voice and cues from the surroundings which would not be available with questionnaires.

As much as interviews allow respondents to narrate on issues they however, have some disadvantages such as:

- It is a mammoth task to record all the responses accurately, especially when the interviewer is also responsible for physically writing them down. The quality of responses, that is, their reliability and validity is dependent on the interviewer (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).
- The disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are that if the interviewers are not fairly competent they may introduce many biases which would then render the data invalid.
- Interviews can also be regarded as time consuming. The researcher tried his best to avoid the above disadvantages by making use of an audio recorder which was able to capture all the participants' responses.

The semi-structured interviews with the parents (lasting about forty minutes each) allowed for consequential interaction between the researcher and participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). All parents were interviewed in the Deputy Principals office which was the pre-designated location set aside by the school for this purpose. The parents first reported to the secretary who informed me on their arrival. The parents were escorted to the Deputy's office by me as not to interfere with the normal flow of the school. An informal conversation on education and the routine process was discussed prior to the interview session. The researcher's main objective was to put the participants at ease before he began with the interview in order to create a relaxed climate. Marshall and Rossman, (2010) state that the attitude the interviewer portrays to the participants is very important because it will reassure them that their viewpoints are valued. I made every attempt not to be biased and only probed those issues that I had an interest in.

In addition I made every effort to maintain the confidentiality of all research participants throughout the interview sessions and also during the collation of the findings. Out of the ten interview sessions, nine took place at the designated school and the one took place at another school because it was more convenient for that parent. Two interview sessions were arranged per day which stretched over a two week period because most interviews were held on a Tuesday and a Wednesday. The semi-structured interviews combined objectivity and depth which successfully generated valuable data. They enabled me to extract meaningful data through verbal communication in the form of open-ended questions (Creswell, 2007). Through open-ended questions the participants were able to express their views and opinions which enabled me as a researcher to get a broader picture of how parents were involved in their children's schooling.

After I introduced the topic I tried to steer the discussion towards a particular direction. As the researcher I tried my utmost not to control the whole situation in a formal manner as to allow the interviewee to tell his/her story from a personal perspective in his/her own words. I also made sure that language familiar to the participants was used during the interview sessions to help guarantee that they could respond to something they understood. During the interviews I followed the specific interview guide; however, this did not deter me from pursuing a range of topics and questions that would add leverage to my study. The semi-structured interview guide enabled me to obtain the data I needed to meet the specific objectives of the study and to standardise the interviews to some degree (Longhurst, 2010). The interview guide contained the relevant questions that were asked during the interview session in the correct order and it provided guidelines to me as the researcher regarding what to say to the research participants at the opening and closing of the interviews. The questions were asked as they appeared in the guide but I had the latitude to pursue a range of topics that arose during the discussion.

3.7.1.3 Audio Recording of interviews

Smith, Harree and Van Langenhoven cited in Greeff, (2005) contend that an audio recorder allows for a more accurate record than notes taken during the interview. It also means that the researcher can concentrate on other important aspects during the interview and not become

preoccupied with note taking. The research participant may feel uncomfortable being recorded and may not respond in a spontaneous manner. Audio recorders should therefore be placed in strategic positions which will not unnerve the participant or researcher.

All my interviews were audio recorded with the permission of my research participants and this allowed me to be more attentive than with note-taking. Although all my participants consented to be audio recorded, the recorder was still placed strategically as not to distract the participants when answering questions.

The audio recorder is an invaluable piece of equipment to the researcher and according to Opendakker (2006) the benefits of audio recording includes the following:

- It helps to eradicate the notion that an analysis might have been influenced by a researcher's values or biases.
- The researcher is free to listen to the respondents in a relaxed manner.
- The discussion flows better because distractions are limited.
- In note taking there is an increased risk of human errors being added to the research.
- The researcher has the opportunity of replaying the entire interview.

Audio recording can also have some disadvantages which include: it can be time consuming, it requires good equipment that can be very expensive and it can record all surrounding sounds.

3.8 Data analysis

The main purpose of data analysis is to structure the data in such a way that it is open to interpretation. This indicates that research does not come to an end with the collection of data but the collected data should be studied, arranged and analysed. The data generated by qualitative methods are usually voluminous and organising all this data usually involves a process of data reduction which is a process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming raw data which can also be referred to as the process of coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that one could make use of inductive analysis, which means that data can be arranged into units or categories and after that the researcher attempts to find relationships among the categories (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2008). One of the major shortcomings made by researchers when it comes to data analysis is when the research question is used to code instead of creating codes and ultimately fails to provide significant examples from the captured data. In the end, themes need to provide an accurate understanding of the overall picture as stated by Braun and Clarke (2006). These authors also agree that like most research methods, this process of data analysis can occur in two forms namely- inductively or deductively.

When analysing your research, it is best to keep your methods as transparent as possible in order to increase the strength of your findings. This will also ensure that whoever is reading your work will understand how you arrived at your conclusions. According to Braun and Clark (2006), thematic analysis has six clearly defined steps. So in order to ensure clarity and rigour in my research process I followed the six steps suggested by them. These include: Step 1 -Familiarise yourself with your data, Step 2- Generate the initial codes, Step 3- Search for your themes, Step 4- Review your themes, Step 5- Define and name your themes, Step 6- Produce your report.

Researchers conducting qualitative analysis should try and match the correct method to the applicable research question. The method of analysis which can be considered an important aspect of the research process should be driven by theoretical assumptions as well as the research questions. After careful consideration I decided that the thematic analysis approach would be suitable to my study. It provides a flexible method of data analysis and allows the researcher to identify the relevant themes in the study.

- Step 1: Familiarise yourself with the data

The data in my study was obtained from questionnaires and individual interview transcripts. The data analysis process began after I collected all my data and this helped me determine the main themes in my research .This can be regarded as the first stage of my data analysis. Once all my interviews were conducted I had all the audio recordings transcribed and this was transformed

into typed text to enable analysis. In order to familiarise myself with the data I spent many hours reading and re-reading the transcribed text as well as the three sets of questionnaires. I also listened to my audio recordings a few times just to make sure my transcriptions were correct. I also grouped my questionnaire data into different sub-headings.

- Step 2: Generating the initial codes

After reading the transcribed text and the questionnaires several times I colour coded the information into categories and sub-categories. I tried to group my respondent's responses according to their consistencies and differences. By following this procedure I was able to explore the connections and relationships between questions so that my data could be organised.

- Step 3: Search for your themes

During my reflection session of each transcript and questionnaires, I tried to group important words and phrases according to the different codes. All data segments which I deemed important were labeled, sorted and categorised into folders so that it formed a meaningful picture. Once all my data was colour coded, I then tried to search for the relevant themes. A theme can be seen as a meaningful pattern in the data that is relevant to the research question (Braun & Clark, 2006).

One must also bear in mind that a theme is different from a code and that several texts recommend that researchers code for themes (Saldana, 2009). This can be misleading because the theme is considered the outcome or result of coding, not that which is coded. The code is the label that is given to a particular piece of data that contribute to a theme that shows a tendency to be similar to each other. I then constructed my themes from my codes and collated all my coded data to each relevant theme that emerged.

- Step 4: Review your themes

The themes that were appropriate to the study were identified and the relationship between one another were noted and recorded. As I organised my data into themes I tried to identify patterns

and connections within and between the themes by observing the similarities and differences in my respondent's responses within a specific category. I then checked that my themes worked in relation to both the coded materials and the entire data set. Once I was satisfied that my themes were able to tell a convincing story about my data, I was prepared to incorporate them into my research.

- Step 5: Define and name your themes

I now used my themes and connections to write a detailed analysis of each theme. In this way I was able to reveal to the reader what story each theme was trying to tell and show how the theme fits into the overall picture about the data. In this way I was able to see the importance of each theme in isolation and could attach a concise and relevant name to each theme.



- Step 6: Produce your report

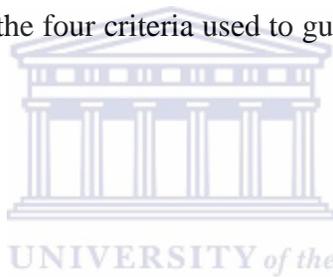
Only once I was certain that I reviewed all the themes in an accurate manner was I prepared to begin the last process of data analysis, producing a report about my findings so that my thesis could tell a persuasive story about the data in relation to existing literature.

When it comes to the aspect of reliability regarding this method there might be a certain element of concern because of the wide variety of interpretations that could possibly arise from the themes.

3.9 Trustworthiness

The concept of validity and reliability are normally not associated with qualitative research but relies heavily on the idea of trustworthiness. By concentrating on the concepts of reliability and validity, qualitative researchers replace the idea with trustworthiness (Poggenpoel, 1998). In order to ensure validity and avoid subjectivity I attempted to remain non-judgmental throughout the research process and reported what was found in a truthful manner.

This study focuses on parent – child involvement and it is likely there will be differences in opinions and viewpoints associated with this interaction. Thus, to ensure the trustworthiness of the data I tried to incorporate a multi-method approach in the study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Hunter and Brewer (2003) mention that the multi-method approach is a strategy for overcoming weaknesses and limitations by deliberately combining different types of methods in the same investigation therefore this can be associated with triangulation. In this study data was collected using both interviews and questionnaires. In line with the case study design an attempt was made to explore the research problem from various standpoints (Hunter & Brewer, 2003). Therefore different participant groups that had relevant information relating to the research problem were included in the study. The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative study is to strengthen the argument that the findings are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In this study, Lincoln and Guba’s model for ensuring the element of trustworthiness in qualitative data was employed. In line with this model, the four criteria used to guarantee trustworthiness in this study are described below:



3.9.1 Truth value

The truth-value component of trustworthiness shows how research is conducted and how accurately the phenomenon under investigation is described. I also tried to determine the context in which the study was conducted and whether the findings were legitimate or not. According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), truth-value can also be termed “credibility,” which is the alternative to internal validity. Credibility therefore refers to data which is thought to be believable to the research participants because it was produced by them (Trochim, 2006).

Lincoln and Guba (2000) states that a qualitative study is credible, that is, has truth value when it presents an accurate description or interpretation of human experiences that others can relate too.

In my study the following strategies for credibility were employed:

- Prolonged field experience

I took six months to prepare for my fieldwork. I also felt that data saturation was achieved because sampling more data would not lead to more information about the research questions.

According to Bowen (2008) data saturation in qualitative research can be regarded as the point in continuous data collection that signals little need to continue because additional data will not confirm emerging understandings.

- Referential adequacy - all respondents

I held a pilot study beforehand to equip myself for the actual study to iron out any potential problems with the completion of the questionnaires and interviews.

- Member checking

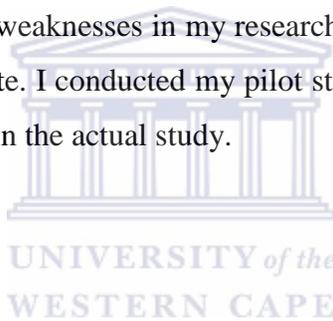
I continuously checked my information with my respondents with regard to the questionnaires as well as the interviews. I also used an audio recorder to capture my interviews which could be replayed throughout the research process.

- Triangulation

When engaging in the process of triangulation one must try and use a variety of data sources in an investigation to elicit a better understanding of the research data. Triangulation can be used to cross-check your research findings in order to prove the validity of your results. Triangulation is a valid procedure employed by a researcher to sieve through research data in order to extract common themes that are embedded in the raw materials. Qualitative researchers prefer using the triangulation technique in order to enhance their data. While reviewing the content of my studies, I realised that no single method in research would lead to the desired outcome. Therefore, in order to achieve and obtain the best quality data it was of paramount importance that I employ the multiple methods approach. In this study I used semi-structured interviews as well as questionnaires for data collection. Later I included triangulation as a method to validate my data and to create a deeper understanding of the material (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Since every method has weaknesses I collected data in a variety of ways (interviews and questionnaires) to build up a better picture about the research problem. I then compared the responses from the semi-structured interviews with the responses from the parent, educator and learner questionnaires to determine similarities and differences.

3.9.2 Applicability

The concept of applicability refers to the degree to which the findings apply to other contexts. In qualitative research, the purpose is to describe a phenomenon to that particular setting and not to generalise the findings to a wider population, but rather to describe a phenomenon or experience. According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), applicability, which can also be referred to as transferability in qualitative research is the equivalent to external validity. In this study, I approached the problem of applicability by accumulating sufficient descriptive data so that a comparison could be made between my findings and other research findings embedded in a similar context. I gave detailed descriptions of how the study was conducted so that other interested parties could easily replicate the study in the future. In order to illuminate all possible problems on the research instruments I decided to conduct a pilot study. The main objective of the pilot study was to eradicate all weaknesses in my research and to boost my confidence ability before the actual data collection date. I conducted my pilot study at another school which did not incorporate any of the participants in the actual study.



3.9.3 Consistency

The concept of consistency, which can also be viewed as the alternative to reliability, refers to the extent to which the research findings would be consistent when repeated in a similar context (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). To guarantee the element of consistency in the study I used Lincoln and Guba's strategy of dependability so that all findings remain consistent for the duration of the study and therefore could be repeated in a study of a similar nature.

3.9.4 Neutrality

According to McGrath (2007), the element of neutrality refers to the way in which the researcher tries to eliminate bias in the research procedure in order to establish whether the findings would be consistent if the research was to be replicated with the same participants or in a similar situational context.

In this study, I tried my utmost to remain as objective as possible, guarding against subjective biases which could alter my interpretation and description of the data. In order to ensure the element of neutrality in my research, I tried to incorporate the strategy of conformability so that the findings of my study were shaped by my respondents and not me. This would help if my findings could be confirmed by other researchers who would embark on a similar journey (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In order to ensure trustworthiness and avoid biases in my data I incorporated the following procedures into my inquiry:

- I used interviews and questionnaires to obtain the raw data.
- During the data collection process I assured all participants that everything under discussion will be regarded as confidential.
- To prevent any discrepancies from contaminating my data I used an audio-recorder to record all my interviews. The interviews were later transcribed and the data was later used to add credibility to my study.
- The interviews were conducted in a familiar setting to the research participants namely the primary school of their children.
- All questions were clarified if the participants did not understand.

Throughout the study I continuously explained the research procedures to all participants (learners, parents and educators), which was necessary to prove that my study was legitimate. It also reassured the participants that they were involved in a professional academic study that could offer positive feedback to the educational field.

3.10 Ethical considerations

As a researcher I tried to follow all the ethical guidelines characteristic of academic research and attempted to approach my research task in an ethical manner. I maintained my professional responsibility towards my research participants and tried to ensure that a high level of respect was maintained throughout my study. A seven- point checklist that was compiled by Patton in Merriam (2009) was used to direct me in the right direction. These ethical considerations are discussed below.

Prior to conducting the study, an application for ethical clearance was made to the Senate Research Ethics Committee, University of the Western Cape. Clearance was granted with the registration number: 14/9/59. (Appendix 12)

My first task was to locate a primary school in the Western Cape as the research site where the research would be carried out and be realised. The researcher first sought permission to conduct the research from the university's ethical clearance committee. Once ethical clearance was approved a letter was sent to the Western Cape Educational Department requesting permission to conduct research at a primary school in the Central Metropole District (Appendix 1). I then personally visited the school to seek permission to conduct the study at the school and handed the principal a letter requesting permission to undertake the research at the school (Appendix 2). A letter from the Western Cape Educational Department (Appendix 10) as well as a letter from my supervisor, Dr. Trevor Moodley (Appendix 11) containing information about the topic under investigation was also handed to the principal. As a sign of willingness to co-operate the principal and the educators left it to the researcher to decide the date for the first meeting with the grade 3, grade 7 parent's and learners. Educators of the grades under study liaised with learners and told their parents about the meeting. In the meeting the researcher explained the aims and objective of the study as well as the whole process of the interviews. At the meeting with the parents the researcher introduced himself and outlined the purpose of the study and ethical considerations that are to be adhered to during the study.

The second point on the list was to abide by promises and reciprocity. As a researcher I promised to deliver feedback about the research after its completion. The consent form was used as an agreement between the researcher and the parents. It clearly explained both parties' roles, expectations, rights as well as the opportunity which will be given to those interested to discuss the research findings upon completion of the study.

The third point was the risk assessment factor. This was done through the application for ethical clearance of the research proposal. Fortunately, no expected risks were anticipated and this again was shared with all the research participants on the consent form to ensure them of the authenticity of the research.

The fourth point referred to the element of confidentiality. All factors were considered in order to protect the participants' identity. I also assured the participants that the information they provided would be kept confidential and in a safe place. Even though certain sections on the questionnaire required personal information regarding the respondent's biographical details, pseudonyms were used. The school in the study was referred to as school A and I did my utmost to make sure that not even the readers of the findings were able to identify the research participants (Babbie, 2008). The data collected from my research participants was only accessible to me and used to complete the writing up of my thesis.

The fifth element on the list referred to informed consent. According to Merriam (2009), the goal of the study must be clearly stressed to all participants and voluntary participation must be guaranteed. As a researcher I made sure that both written and verbal consent was obtained from all research participants. The consent form, which was drafted by myself and checked by my supervisor clearly explained the purpose of the study and it also stipulated that the participants had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Included on the consent form were all the relevant details of myself, supervisor and university. When I met with the research participants I informed them about the purpose, nature and consequences of the study. I assured all the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary and they were able to withdraw at any time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

It was my duty as a researcher to accept full responsibility for all research data. All data material was safely protected and only I had access to the research files. In this manner the sixth principle of taking ownership of the data was covered.

I frequently had contact sessions with my supervisor who advised me accordingly and in this way the last principle was fulfilled.

The above ethical considerations were taken seriously by me throughout the duration of the study. Although many rules and regulations can be presented to the researcher, the ultimate

responsibility still lies with the individual researcher as the most important research tool to conduct a truly ethical study (Merriam, 1998).

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the methodology of this study where a description of research design was presented. This chapter also gave background of the research site and participants. This was followed by a description of data analysis procedures after collecting the data. The following chapter deals with the presentation and discussion of findings.



Chapter 4

Presentation of findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings as well as the discussion of findings of the study which explored parental involvement in their children's schooling at a previously disadvantaged school. As a researcher, I had to consider all aspects of the data gathering process such as; the type of information the participants offered, the manner in which the participants answered the questionnaires and how they presented themselves during the interviews.

The findings are presented as per data collection strategy as well as per participant group. In the case of the learner participants, the findings will be presented per grade group. This manner of presenting findings is an attempt at demonstrating in-depth analyses of data. The discussion of findings is structured in answering each of the study's research questions as a means of presenting a coherent synthesis of the data, which also includes reference to relevant literature.

When collating the information, I incorporated quotations from the data to express the ideas made by the research participants and to illustrate that the findings were derived from the original raw data (Mahlangu, 2008). Epstein's typology was used as a framework within this study; however the research participants were allowed to discuss parental involvement within their own frame of reference that allowed themes to emerge from the data. Epstein's six categories were used as a guideline during the research process and this enabled me to cross-reference to literature with regard to parental involvement in primary schools.

4.2 Presentation of findings

Qualitative thematic data analysis was employed in this study to establish how participants assign meaning to a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, understandings and knowledge. The process of data analysis involved making sense of the questionnaires and the interview schedules. The starting points for the data analysis

This was a continual and reflective process carried out by the researcher so that a detailed understanding about the research participants' views on the topic could be obtained. The questionnaires and transcribed material were analysed according to the 6 steps as suggested by Braun and Clark (2006). (See chapter 3).

According to Maree and Van Der Westhuizen (2008) it is best to start with an inductive analysis where the main purpose is to allow research findings to emerge from the significant themes. When it came to the questionnaires there were open-ended as well as closed-ended type of questions. The closed-ended questions took the form of 'yes' and 'no' questions as well as likert scale questions that included 'always', 'often', 'sometimes' or 'never' responses. Unfortunately the only disadvantage about this was that I was unable to probe the research participants to elaborate further about the question. When it came to the closed-ended questions; I tabled all the raw data and calculated an overall score based on the total number of questions. In this manner, I was able to make inferences from the data analysis. I used the open-ended questions to help me determine similarities and differences in the data and in this way various themes emerged.

Before the data collection process I categorised the learners into three scholastic achievement groups (weak, average and strong). I also kept a record of who their parents were so that I was able to link the two sample groups to each other. In this way I was able to connect the parents to a specific scholastic achievement group.

4.2.1 Biographical profile of parent participants who were interviewed

Table 4.1 illustrates the biographical profile of the parent participants who were interviewed by the researcher. Accordingly, ten parents were interviewed which consisted of five grade 3 and five grade 7 parents. This group's educational qualifications range from: one completing grade 12, five completing schooling in the grades ranging from 8 to 11 and four indicated they have a grade 7 certificate. The parent participants in this group are the biological parents of the learners with 7 being married and 3 being single.

Table 4.1 Biographical profiles of parents who were interviewed

1.	Marital Status	Single		Married	
		3		7	
2.	Gender	Male		Female	
		1		9	
3.	Relation to learner	Parent		Guardian	
		10		0	
4.	Educational Qualification	Gr. 1 - 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8-11	Grade 12
		0	4	5	1
5.	Employment status	Employed		Unemployed	
		0		10	

4.2.2 Biographical profile of parent participants who completed the research questionnaire

Table 4.2 illustrates the profile of the parent participants who completed the questionnaires. Eighteen parents, three males and 15 females completed the questionnaire. This sample included the 10 parents who had also participated in the parent interviews. Their educational qualifications ranged from: five who had completed grade 12, five who had completed grades 8-11, six possessed grade 7 certificates while two indicated that their school qualifications were below a grade 7 level. Out of the eighteen questionnaires only one was completed by the learner's guardian, her aunt. According to the information, 12 participants indicated they were married while the other 6 regarded themselves as being single.

4.2.3. Educator participants' biographical profiles

Table 4.3 illustrates the profile of the educator participants who completed the questionnaire. The four educator participants consisted of three female foundation phase educators while the one male participant was a senior phase educator. All the educator participants were classified as post level one educators whose teaching experience ranged from 8 to 30 years. This was regarded as ideal for the researcher because all four educators had a wealth of information about parental

involvement. One of the educators had a university degree while the other 3 had a grade 12 certificate plus a four year teacher training qualification.

Table 4.2: Biographical profile of parents who completed the research questionnaire

1.	Marital Status	Single		Married	
		6		12	
2.	Gender	Male		Female	
		3		15	
3.	Relation to learner	Parent		Guardian	
		17		1	
4.	Educational Qualification	Gr. 1 - 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8-11	Grade 12
		3	6	4	5
5.	Number of people living in household	1 – 5	6 – 10	10 – 15	15 – 20
		9	7	1	1

Table 4.3: Educator participants' biographical profiles

1.	Marital Status	Single		Married	
		0		4	
2.	Gender	Male		Female	
		1		3	
3.	Grade you are teaching	Grade 3		Grade 7	
		3		1	
4.	Teaching experience in years	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
		1	1	2	0
5.	Educational qualification	M+3	M+4	Degree	Post. Grad
		0	3	1	0

4.2.4 Biographical profile of learner participants

Table 4.4 illustrates the profile of the learner participants who completed the questionnaire. Eighteen learners, eight boys and ten girls completed the questionnaires. Nine learners (five girls and four boys) from each grade 3 and 7 respectively made up this group. These learners were selected to form part of the learner participant group based on their scholastic achievement (weak, average or strong scholastic achievement category). Therefore for each of grades 3 and 7 respectively, three learners per scholastic achievement group were chosen. Ten of the learner participants' parents were interviewed and also completed the parent questionnaire. The other eight learners' parents only completed the parent questionnaire.

Table 4.4: Learner participants' biographical profiles

1.	Grade of learner	Grade 3		Grade 7	
		9		9	
2.	Gender	Male		Female	
		8		10	
3.	Relation to parent participant	Parent		Guardian	
		17		1	
4.	Gender by grade	Gr.3-male	Gr.3female	Gr.7-male	Gr.7-female
		4	5	4	5
5.	Number of people living in household	1 – 5	6 – 10	10 – 15	15 – 20
		9	7	1	1

4.2.5 Findings related to grade 3 learners' responses

When analysing the grade 3 learner responses the following themes emerged from the data: parents' attitude towards education, promoting a culture of reading in the home and parents assisting their children with homework.

With regards to the theme: **parents' attitude towards the importance of education**, all learner participants from the strong and average scholastic achievement categories and only one learner from the weak scholastic achievement category reported that they believed that their parents regarded education as being important. Two learners from the weak scholastic achievement category reported that they did not know whether their parents believed education to be important. It also emerged from the study that all the learners in the strong and average scholastic categories and only one learner from the weak scholastic achievement category reported that their parents discussed the importance of education with them.

With regards to the theme: **promoting a culture of reading in the home**, the following activities were considered: parents/guardians listening to their children reading aloud, parents/guardians encouraging their children to read and library membership.

Grade 3 learner participants reported that their parents/guardians listened to them reading aloud. This activity was reported by the learners across all scholastic achievement groups although it was not as regular for two learners in the weak scholastic achievement group and not at all for one learner in the weak category. Normally one would expect the parents/guardians from the weak scholastic category to be more involved in their children's reading activities because this can be considered a way of remediating a learner's academic ability (Sheldon, 2009). Most schools encourage their learners in the Foundation phase to practice their reading skills on a daily basis and expect their parent body to be actively involved in this activity.

With regard to encouraging their children to read, the strong and average scholastic achievement group reported that their parents encouraged them to read compared to the weak scholastic achievement group who reported that their parents did not encourage them to read at all. Participants also reported observing their parents read. The frequency of observation of parents reading was highest for the strong scholastic achievement group and lowest for the weak scholastic achievement group.

With regard to library membership, all the learners in the strong scholastic achievement category reported that they belong to a library compared to one learner each in the average and weak scholastic achievement categories. Learners also reported on their parents/guardians' library

membership. Two parents/guardians from each of the strong and average scholastic achievement categories and only one parent/guardian from the weak category were reported to be members of a library. This finding was consistent with the findings related to learners observing their parents read.

With regard to the theme: **parents/guardians assisting their children with homework**, all but one (from the strong scholastic achievement category) of the grade 3 learner participants reported that their parents assisted them with homework activities. Most (two-thirds) of the learners reported that their mothers rather than their fathers assisted them with homework. The frequency of parental assistance with regard to test preparation and the completion of projects and assignments were highest among the strong achievement group and progressively declined for the respective average and weak scholastic achievement groups. All participants reported following a routine after school and having set times to do their homework.

Participants expressed positive feelings about their parents' assistance with regards to homework activities. It emerged from the data that the positive aspects of parent assistance included: that learners enjoy how their parents mediate the work to them when assisting with homework, they appreciate how their parents explain the work, enjoy the manner in which their parents communicate with them when assisting with homework and parents spending time with them during homework activities. Here are a few of their responses:

....I feel very happy because they help me

....I like it when my father help me, I am happy

....the way they explain to me

....when they speak softly to me

....the way they talk to me

....they spend time with me

Although all the grade 3 learner participants were positive about their parents/guardians assisting them with homework, there were instances when parents expressed impatience during homework assistance. The following responses illustrated parents' impatience at times:

....I don't like it if my mom shout

....that they are impatient

....he do not listen

Grade 3 learner participants also commented on their parents' challenges when assisting them with homework. All the learners from the average and weak scholastic achievement categories indicated that their parents did not like to assist them with Mathematics compared to the stronger group who indicated that their parents were able to assist them with all the subjects. One learner in the average scholastic category also reported that his parents/guardians did not like to assist him with Afrikaans. This could be related to the fact that the parents' first language is English.

4.2.6 Findings related to grade 7 learners' responses

When analysing the grade 7 learner responses the following themes emerged from the data: parental involvement in relation to school activities, parents' attitude toward education, parents assisting their children with homework and promoting a culture of reading in the home.

With regards to the theme: **parental involvement in relation to school activities**, it emerged from the study that three learners from the strong scholastic achievement category and one learner respectively from the average and weak scholastic categories reported that their parents attended school meetings pertaining to their scholastic progress. Three learners (two from the average and one from the weak scholastic achievement categories) reported that their parents did not attend school meetings pertaining to their scholastic progress. One could therefore conclude that in this study the parents from the strong scholastic achievement category attended school meetings pertaining to their children's progress more regularly than the other two achievement categories.

One must bear in mind that there is a difference between school meetings and school functions. School meetings are normally organised by the school to discuss the progress of the learners whereas school functions are organised as part of the fundraising activities that are planned for

the year. Most learners across the scholastic achievement groups reported that their parents did not attend or volunteer to assist with school functions.

With regards to the theme: **parents' attitude towards the importance of education**, only the learners in the strong and average scholastic achievement category reported that they believed that their parents regarded education as important. Two learners from the weak scholastic achievement category reported that they did not know whether their parents believed education to be important while the other learner from this category believed that education was not important to his parents. However, the findings indicated that the parents of all three grade 7 scholastic achievement groups discussed the importance of education with their children.

With regards to the theme: **parents/guardians assisting their children with homework**, most learners (6) across all three scholastic achievement categories reported being assisted by their parents with homework. However, parental assistance respectively declined from highest to lowest scholastic achievement categories, which was a worrying result. All learners in the strong category, two learners in the average category and only one learner in the weak scholastic achievement category reported that their parents assisted them, with homework activities.

Two-thirds of the grade 7 learner participants reported that their mothers rather than their fathers assisted them with homework. The frequency of parental assistance with regards to test preparation and the completion of projects and assignments were highest among the strong scholastic achievement group and respectively declined for the average and weak scholastic achievement groups. All but one (from the average scholastic achievement category) of the grade 7 learner participants reported that their parents were able to assist them with homework activities.

The grade 7 participants expressed positive feelings about their parents' assistance with regards to parental homework assistance. Participants provided different reasons for such positive feelings such as: feelings of happiness and appreciation for parents making themselves available in assisting their children, enjoying the parent-child dialogue, learning that occurs between parent

and child when engaging with the homework and the sense of security that the learners feel with the parents being involved as the more knowledgeable other. Here are a few of their responses:

...I feel good because my parents make me feel happy

....I feel happy because we like to challenge each other

....they are taking their responsibility as parents to help me

....I feel confident when they help me

....I feel lucky because not all parents have the time to spend with their children

....happy when my aunty help me

....I like it when they talk to me

....they always understand the work

....I like it when they correct me when I am wrong

.... I like it when they explain the work

....I learn something new



Although all the grade 7 learners' participants were positive about their parents/guardians homework assistance, there were instances when parents expressed negative emotions while assisting their children. Impatience and frustration on the part of the parents were common elements detected in the learners' responses. Some learners reported that they did not like the physical punishment delivered by their parents while being assisted with homework activities. Here are a few of their comments:

....when they hit you when you get something wrong

....sometimes she likes to shout at me

....I don't like it when they try to do my homework or my assignments

.... my mother gets frustrated

Most of the grade 7 learner participants (seven out of nine) reported that their parents did not like to help them with Mathematics compared to the two learners in the strong scholastic achievement group who indicated that their parents could not assist them with Afrikaans. However, one must bear in mind that there is a difference between the parents ability to assist their children versus

the parents ‘not liking’ to assist with a specific subject. The low educational qualifications of the parents may be regarded as a challenge to parental involvement when it comes to the learners’ homework activities.

With regards to the theme: **promoting a culture of reading in the home**, the following activities were considered: parents/guardians encouraging their children to read and library membership. Parents encouraging their children to read, was highest in the strong scholastic achievement group with all learners from this group reporting that their parents encouraged them to read. In comparison, only one learner each from the average and weak scholastic achievement groups reported that their parents encouraged them to read. Participants also reported observing their parents read. The frequency of observation of parents reading was highest for the strong scholastic achievement group and lowest for the weak scholastic achievement group.

With regard to library membership, all the learners in the average scholastic achievement category reported that they belong to a library compared to two learners in the strong scholastic achievement category and no grade 7 learner participants in the weak scholastic achievement category. Learners also reported on their parents/guardians’ library membership. Three parents/guardians from the strong scholastic achievement category and two from the average scholastic achievement category were reported to be members of a library. None of the parents/guardians from the weak scholastic achievement category were reported to be members of a library. This finding was consistent with the findings related to learners observing their parents read.

4.2.7 Findings related to grade 3 parent participants’ questionnaire responses

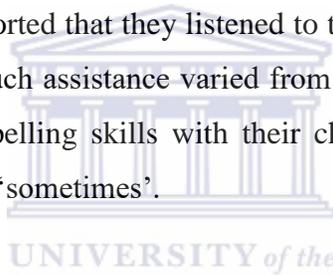
When analysing the grade 3 parent participants’ responses the following themes emerged from the data: parental assistance in relation to ‘home-based involvement’-homework and parental assistance in relation to ‘school-based assistance’ - volunteering.

With regard to the theme: **parental assistance in relation to home-based involvement-homework**, parents reported a number of activities such as: homework supervision and

assistance, parents' attitudes towards such involvement, monitoring of homework, practising reading and spelling skills, managing daily activities (e.g. television viewing, routine, etc.), assisting with assessment preparation and highlighting the importance of education. A discussion of these activities follows.

It emerged from the study that the parents from all three scholastic achievement groups supervised and assisted their children with homework activities. All parents also reported enjoying and being able to supervise the homework of their children. Two parents from the strong and weak scholastic achievement category and three parents from the average scholastic achievement category reported that they 'always' ensure that their children's homework is completed for the following day.

All the parent participants also reported that they listened to their children reading at least once a week, although the frequency of such assistance varied from 'always' to 'often'. All the grade 3 parents also reported practising spelling skills with their children with the frequency of such activities varying from 'always' to 'sometimes'.



Most of the parents/guardians from each scholastic achievement category reported that they regularly look through their children's school books. All parents also reported that they assisted their children for a major test or examination, although the frequency of such assistance varied from 'always' to 'sometimes'. All; but one of the grade 3 parent participants were also aware of the assessment requirements of the child for the year.

All nine parents also reported that they were involved in home-based involvement by: monitoring their children's television viewing habits, encouraging healthy eating habits, ensuring that their children had adequate sleeping time and ensuring that their children had an excellent school attendance.

All the parent participants across the scholastic achievement categories reported that they have identified a regular time and place in their home for their children to complete their homework. However, the parents from the strong and average scholastic achievement categories reported that

they have a set routine in place for their children after school in comparison to the weaker category. Although, all the grade 3 parent participants reported that they supervised their children's homework activities; the parents/guardians from the strong achievement category also reported that they held their children responsible for completing their assignments and tasks on time. This was unlike the average and weak scholastic achievement groups where two parents/guardians from each group reported that they did not hold their children responsible for completing assignments and tasks on time.

The parents/guardians from the average and weak scholastic achievement categories and one from the strong scholastic achievement category reported that they had sufficient time to supervise their children's homework activities. All the grade 3 parent participants reported that they felt free to contact their child's teacher to discuss any situation. This suggested good parent-teacher relations.

All the grade 3 parent participants; except one (from the average scholastic achievement category) reported that they discussed the importance of education with their children.

With regards to the theme: **parental assistance in relation to school-based activities-volunteering**, most (7) of the grade 3 parent participants reported that they did not volunteer their services with regard to school activities. All parents/guardians from the strong and average scholastic achievement group reported that they attended certain functions offered by the school compared to only one parent/guardian in the weak scholastic group. The parents of the strong scholastic achievement category reported that they were prepared to volunteer their services to assist learners who were struggling at school compared to the one positive response in the average group and two positive responses in the weak scholastic achievement group.

The majority (5) of the grade 3 parent participants reported that they were fully aware of the different volunteering activities offered at their children's school. However, the majority (5) were unaware of all the fundraising events taking place at the school for the duration of the year.

4.2.8 Findings related to grade 7 parent participants' questionnaire responses

When analysing the grade 7 parent participants' responses the following themes emerged from the data: parental assistance in relation to 'home-based involvement'-homework and parental assistance in relation to 'school-based assistance'-volunteering.

With regards to the theme: **parental assistance in relation to home-based involvement-homework**, grade 7 parent participants reported involvement in a number of activities such as: homework supervision and assistance, parents' attitudes towards such involvement, monitoring of homework, practising reading and spelling skills, managing daily activities (e.g. television viewing, routine, etc.), assisting with assessment preparation and emphasising the importance of education.

It emerged from the study that the grade 7 parent participants across all three scholastic achievement groups supervised and assisted their children with homework activities. However, the frequency of such supervision and assistance was highest for parent participants in the strong scholastic achievement category and respectively declined for the average and weak categories. All parents also reported that they enjoy assisting their children with their homework. However, two parents (one each from the weak and strong scholastic achievement categories) reported that they were unable to assist their children with their homework. Although all the parents checked that their children's homework was completed for the following day; the frequency of this activity was highest for the strong achievement group and declined respectively for the average and weak groups. In fact all the parents of the weakest group reported 'sometimes' in relation to this activity.

All the parent participants reported that they listened to their children reading at least once a week, although the frequency of such assistance varied from 'always' to 'sometimes'. All the grade 7 parents also reported practising spelling skills with their children with the frequency of such activities varying from 'always' to 'sometimes'.

All of the parents/guardians from each scholastic achievement category reported that they regularly look through their children's school books, although the frequency of doing so ranged

from 'always' to 'sometimes'. All parents also reported that they assisted their children for a major test or examination. However, the frequency of such activity was highest for the strong and average scholastic achievement categories (varying from 'always' to 'often'), with only one parent from the weak achievement category reporting 'often' and the other two reporting 'sometimes'. Most of the grade 7 parent participants (7) except two from the weak scholastic achievement category were also aware of the assessment requirements of their children for the year.

All parent participants; except one from the weak scholastic achievement category reported that: they ensure that their children had adequate sleeping time and that they supported their children's learning by encouraging good eating habits. Most parents (6) reported monitoring their children's television viewing habits; however the prevalence of not monitoring television viewing was highest for the weak category (two out of three parents).

Most of the parent/guardian participants (7) reported that they have identified a regular time and place in their home for their children to complete their homework except two parent participants (one each from the average and weak scholastic achievement categories). All the parents reported that they have a set routine put in place for their children after school. However, the frequency of this was highest for the strong scholastic achievement group and declined respectively for the average and weak groups. In fact, all three parent participants from the weak achievement group reporting enforcing routine 'sometimes'. All; but one (from the weak category) grade 7 parent participants (8) reported that they held their children responsible for completing their assignments and tasks on time.

All, but one parent from the strong scholastic achievement group reported that they had sufficient time to supervise their children's homework activities. Most of the parent participants (7) reported that they felt free to contact their child's teacher to discuss any situation besides two parents (one each from the strong and weak scholastic achievement categories).

All the grade 7 parent participants reported that they discussed the importance of education with their children. All nine parents also reported that they were involved in home-based involvement by ensuring that their children had an excellent school attendance.

With regards to the theme: **parental assistance in relation to school-based activities-volunteering**, only two parents/guardians from the strong scholastic achievement category reported that they volunteered their services at school. Only two parents (one each from the strong and weak scholastic achievement categories) reported that they were prepared to volunteer their services to assist learners who were struggling at school. Attendance of certain school functions was reported to be highest among parent participants of the average category and lowest among parent participants of the weak scholastic achievement group.

Two-thirds of the parents (6) reported that they were fully aware of the different volunteering activities offered at their children's school. With regard to parents' awareness of fundraising events being initiated by the school, only two parents (one each from both the strong and weak scholastic achievement categories) reported being not aware of all the fundraising events taking place at their children's school.



4.2.9 Findings emanating from interviews with grade 3 parents

When analysing the grade 3 parent participants' interview responses the following themes emerged from the data: parental assistance with regards to homework activities, parents' attitude towards the importance of education and volunteering at the school.

With regards to the theme: **parental assistance with regards to homework activities**, the following five sub-themes emerged from the data: nature of parental assistance with regards to homework activities, parents' attitude towards homework, the parents' views about the homework given, the learner's routine after school and challenges with regards to homework activities.

With regards to the sub-theme: **nature of parental assistance with regards to homework activities**, the parents reported that they were involved in their children's learning activities at home in a variety of ways. Any school-related activity can basically be considered as homework because it is an activity the learners complete at home and not in the classroom. Homework can be regarded as an important facet of education and it became clear from the data that the grade 3 parents assisted their children with school-related activities that had to be completed at home.

The nature of grade 3 parent participants' involvement in their children's homework included: assistance and supervision of homework, practising reading skills, helping their children learn their timetables, helping their children to study and assisting with assignments, assisting with word building activities, practising dictionary skills, assisting their children with preparation for assessments, playing the role of 'teacher', providing resource materials such as books and equipment about school related experiences. From the responses of the parents, one could deduce that the parents tried to incorporate real life activities such as cooking into their assistance through role-play and they also tried to replicate the classroom set up in their homes. Let's take a look at a few of the parents' responses:

... I make sure they do their homework; I sit with them when they get the timetable from school for writing exams.

...I always ask them about their assignments, I always ask them about their homework. When its studying time I always let them study.

...ek prober altyd om uit te vind wat mekeer hulle by die skool, hoe gaan dit by die skool, hoe die meneer hulle treat [...I try my best to find out what they require at school, how they are being treated by their teacher]

...I help with homework. I'm there if the teacher needs me.

...I'm very involved um like I said here at home and here at school also.

... as soon as he gets home then we do some, like every day reading. I will assist him with the words and um even the homework we go through it and I try to let him do it on his own.

...at home um.. like I said I have a board and then I have my books, I always collect books. Reading is important. I even show them how to use the dictionary.

... ek vra vir haar elke middag of sy huiswerk het en vra of sy verstaan dan help ek haar [I ask her every afternoon if she has homework and if she understand the work then I assist and help her]

... I do sit with her in the afternoon with her homework.

...I am at home busy in the kitchen and then I ask her to bring me some potatoes but I would tell her also look here bring mommy five potatoes and then you bring me two onions.

The parent participants reported that they are involved in their children's learning experience at home by supervising and assisting their children with homework activities. However, the quality of the assistance may differ between the participants because of their age, educational background and their ability to assist. One must also bear in mind that there is a difference between parental supervision and assistance of homework activities. Supervising homework activities basically refers to the parents asking whether the activity was completed or not. Parental assistance refers to direct involvement whereby the parent actually engages in the activity with their children.

With regards to the sub-theme: **parents' attitude towards their children's homework**, the grade 3 parent participants reported that they adopted a positive attitude towards their children's homework because they regard it as an extension of the school. Let's take a look at their responses:

...I have a positive attitude because I make it fun.

... I always try and be positive.

...ek is nie negative nie [I am not negative]

...I have a positive attitude towards her homework.

...positive...maybe some things the child don't understand and homework is part of a practice.

Despite the grade 3 parent participants feeling positive about their children's homework, they were concerned about the amount of homework given on a regular basis. The parents were of the opinion that the homework is far too much for a grade 3 learner because it consumes all their free time after school. The parents also believed that some of the homework activities are far too

difficult for the learners to handle. They expressed that the amount of homework was far too much and there was a possibility that their children could become confused. One parent made reference to the expectations of the new curriculum (Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement [CAPS]) that were responsible for the homework overload. Here are a few of their responses:

...Sometimes I feel it is a bit too much for them to handlethey do homework until they go to bed.

...ek dink daai is ook te veel want somtyds raak hulle dearmekaar met al die goed wat hulle moet doen. [I think it is too much because sometimes they become confused with all the stuff they must do]

...too much work, too much work. The CAPS it's not working for our children.

With regards to the sub-theme: **following a set routine after school**, it was reported by the parents that their children had to follow a set routine after school. This can be considered a good component of homework because it adds structure to the learner's life. Most of the parents stipulated that directly after school their children would come home, get undressed, eat a snack and then do their homework. The Moslem parents reported that directly after school their children attended Moslem school (to receive religious instruction) and would engage in homework activities on their return. All the parents reported that their children had to be in bed by eight o'clock and would be awoken between six or seven the following morning. This indicates that the learners would get roughly between ten or eleven hours of sleep depending if they watched television or not.

...after school they go to madrassa and when they come back then we do the homework and then after that then its bath time

...when she comes out of school she is supposed to undress and do her homework

...when he gets home and then he firstly eats and then go to moslem school which is for an hour and a half. When he gets back I give him sometimes so half an hour play time. .. a hour we sit with the work and afterwards its bath and eat and sleep again.

...sy kom huistoe dan trek sy haar uit tot sy besluit sy gaan haar huiswerk doen. [she comes home, undresses and then I let her decide when she is going to complete her homework]

...um when she comes from school then it's okay undress you first and doing your homework.

...most evenings, I told them 7 o' clock they must be in bed and just read or watch a little bit of TV but 8 o' clock you need to sleep.

...plus minus he has to be in bed at eight.

...she gets a full 10 hours sleep.

With regards to the sub-theme: **challenges with regards to homework activities** only two out of the five parents reported that they experienced certain challenges when trying to assist their children with homework activities. The rest of the parents reported that they did not experience any major challenges with regards to homework activities because their children were only in grade 3. Those parents who experienced challenges when assisting their children with homework, reported the following: they did not understand certain homework activities given to their children, they had not been exposed to certain methodologies (in Mathematics), their children refused to listen to them at times (disobedience), the child became frustrated when the parent could not explain the homework to them (resulting in arguments) and sometimes the parents did not have the energy to assist their children (mainly because they felt obligated to provide such assistance because nobody else was available to give such assistance). Let us take a look at their responses with regards to the challenges they faced when providing homework support:

... not all their homework, sometimes like I said sometimes I don't understand

...okay sometimes then I can't help him because I don't understand.

...yes I don't understand or I've never done that you know. Units I know how to do it but now the other day he came home with a grid and then I was lost.

...I have to call her ten times before she does her homework.

...there are days we fight like husband and wife but I need to get him through this because it's already the next term.

...daar is kere wat ek nou niri lus im te assist met hulle nie. Ek is die enigste een by die huis want hulle pa is nie by die huis nie. Ek moet hulle maar help. [...there are times that I just don't feel like assisting them with homework. Their father is not at home so I must do it.]

With regards to the theme: **parents' attitude towards the importance of education**, the following three sub-themes emerged from the data: the parents' views about the importance of education, the parents understanding of the concept parental involvement and the role of the community in promoting education.

With regards to the sub-theme: **the parents' views about the importance of education**, the grade 3 parent participants reported that education was very important and would open doors for their children with regards to their future. The parents linked education to a successful life in the future. The grade 3 parents reported that they discussed the importance of education with their children. They also reported that they only wanted the best for their children and believed that they (children) would have a better standard of living if they completed their schooling career. The parents also believed that education would help their children achieve their goals. Let's take a look at a few of their responses:

... I discuss it with them....there are examples in the community of what no education or very little education does.

...Yes, I discuss the importance of education with them... you can't waste your life.

...Ja ek discuss daai met hulle. Ek se vir hulle eendag kan hulle goeie werk kry as hulle skool klaar maak. [Yes I discuss it with them. I tell them that they could get good jobs one day if they complete school]

...if we don't have education we won't have work or we won't be successful in life.

...education is belangrik dat die kinders goeie werke kan kry. [Education is important so that the children can get good jobs]

...you don't get a good job without any education.

...I want the best for my child

...I would like them to achieve certain goals when it comes to education.

...I want them to have a good education.

With regards to the sub-theme: **parents understanding of the concept parental involvement**, the parents reported that parental involvement was mainly limited to home-based involvement such as: assisting with homework, helping with reading activities, assisting with projects and

assignments and helping their children study for a test. It was clear from their responses that they believed parental involvement to be an important aspect of education. Nowhere in their responses did they link parental involvement to school-based involvement such as volunteering and supporting the school. The parents also made a positive connection between having a better life and parental involvement. Some parents stated that nobody assisted them with their homework activities when they were growing up because that was how their community was structured in their time (children had to do homework by themselves). In a way they some parents seem to blame their parents for the circumstances they find themselves in (no education, unemployed).

...for me personally it is very important, that is very important in a child's life to have parents that you can come to and speak to your parents about what you did. It shows them you interested.

...I do everything as in reading, I think all that [homework]

...we have to get involved today because the workload is a lot. So we have to sit with our kids. I help with homework.

...I think parental involvement is very important. Again here in our area they don't care about the children. I am involved in my children's education because I help them with reading, projects and their homework so am involved.

...Parental involvement in education, I think it is very important. I think it's important because if you don't remind the children every day that you must be something in life and you have to do what's good for you at the end of the day because why I didn't have what you are having now. My parents didn't ask me do you have homework, that time it was you must go to school finish and klaar [over]. I want better for my child, job and money, not like me.

...I will ask them about their assignments, I will ask them about their homework. When it is study time I always let them study. I'm really very involved in my children's education.

...I don't have a job, I'm not financially secure at all, so I want my children to become something in life so I'm involved in their education like with homework. My parents didn't help me and now.

...Die ouers moet eintlike belangstel in hulle kinders se huiswerk en wat aangaan by die skool. As jy nie weet wat aangaan by die skool nie sal jy nie weet hoe om jou kind te help nie. [The parents must show an interest in their children's homework and they must be aware of what is happening at school. If they are not aware of what is happening at school they won't be able to assist their children.]

With regards to the sub-theme: **the role of the community in promoting education**, the parents reported that the community itself did nothing to improve the quality of education of their children. The parents were of the opinion that the area in which they resided was unsafe and that the community offered little, if any recreational facilities for the youth of the area. The parents believed that the community did not support education because it was located in a sub-economic area. The parent participants also stipulated that parents were generally not involved in educational activities of their children because they preferred indulging in drug and alcohol abuse. Here are a few of the parents' responses when they were asked if the community itself supports learning and development of children:

....I don't think so. The community don't support education.

....Some members [support education]not all because our community is mostly sub-economic

....No, no....people are more involved with drugs, they are more involved with drinking wine

....nee, niemand staan eintlik mekaar by in daai community van ons nie [No, they don't stand together in our community]

....no, if they did they would have had something going on for the children like with activities

With regards to the theme: **volunteering at school**, the grade 3 parents were also more willing than the grade 7 parents to volunteer their services at their children's school. Out of the five grade 3 parents who were interviewed, four indicated that they were involved in voluntary work at the school. One must bear in mind that the parents who were interviewed stated that they were unemployed. The four parents who assisted with voluntary work seemed to enjoy helping out at their children's school because they viewed it as a form of parental responsibility. The grade 3 parent participants reported that they were willing to assist with fundraising functions at the school. The four grade 3 parent participants also reported they were involved in voluntary work at school such as working in the kitchen, making and selling chip rolls, being a marshall at certain events, helping at a table and selling certain items, feeding the learners, supervising a class when the teacher was absent and supporting events or functions organised by the school. Here are a few of their responses:

....I love being involved when the fundraising comes because there is so many things you can cook and make.

....very famous at our school is the chip rolls, our combos and the two ladies with myself, I mean we sell almost 300 chip rolls.

....I was one of the marshalls and wherever I see I can fit in or fall in.

....ek help as daar miskien fundraising is meneer. By die tafel stan ek en die goedjies verkoop nou sal ek se. [I help with fundraising. I assist by helping out at the table- selling goods.]

....I like doing voluntary work. I am doing it for my children.

....I even assist the ladies in the kitchen when I'm here.

....If a teacher is absent or if they need somebody to help in the kitchen to feed the children then I help at the school.

....Ja if they let me know, ja then I'm here.

4.2.10 Findings emanating from interviews with grade 7 parents

When analysing the grade 7 parent participants' interview responses the following themes emerged from the data: parental assistance with regards to homework activities, parents' attitude towards the importance of education, volunteering at school and communication with the school.

With regards to the theme: **parental assistance with regards to homework activities**, the following six sub-themes emerged from the data: nature of parental assistance with regards to homework activities, parents' attitude towards homework, the parents' views about the homework given, the learner's routine after school, challenges with regards to homework activities and the level of support as the children progresses to a higher grade.

With regards to the sub-theme: **nature of parental assistance with regards to homework activities**, the parent participants reported that they were involved in their children's learning activities at home in a variety of ways. Any school-related activity that the learner has to complete at home can be regarded as homework. The parents believed homework is an important component of education and it became clear from the data that the grade 7 parents assisted their children with school-related activities that had to be completed at home.

The nature of parents' involvement in their children's homework included: assistance and supervision of homework, making sure the correct homework was completed; signing the homework books, making sure the homework was completed before outside play was permitted, managing their children's study time, interacting with their children by explaining the homework activities, promoting reading by encouraging library membership, and making sure their children attend school and that their daily needs were met. Let's take a look at a few of the parents' responses:

... I will ask her if she has homework and I will help her. I try to explain to her.

... I always ask them about their homework.

... I make sure that the homework that is given is the same as the homework that he must do in his book.

...I will always tell her mommy must sign your book.

... they must finish their homework before they can go outside.

... I do sit with her in the afternoon with her homework.

...Ek sit daar tot hy klaar is met sy huiswerk. [I sit until he has completed his homework]

...I make sure that they are at school every day; I make sure they are well fed; I make sure that they do their homework.

...I sit with them and I manage their time and make sure they have a good breakfast the day they write and that they sleep for at least 8 hours per day.

...besides doing homework, to read and encourage them to belong to a library.

With regard to the sub-theme: **parents' attitude towards their children's homework**, the grade 7 parent participants reported that they adopted a positive attitude towards their children's homework. They believed homework forms an integral part of the teaching process whereby learners have the opportunity to consolidate work completed in the classroom. This can be considered a valuable characteristic because it could influence the learners to emulate their parents' attitude towards homework.

Let's take a look at a few of their responses about their attitude towards their children's homework:

...I have a positive attitude towards her homework

...Always positive.

...Ek is tevrede met sy huiswerk, positief [I am satisfied with his homework, positive]

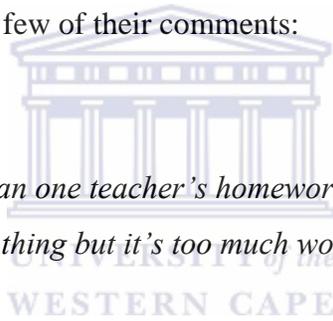
...Homework is sometimes important. I feel to repeat maybe some things the child don't understand and homework is part of a practice. Positive attitude.

Despite the parents' positive feelings about their children's homework, they were concerned about the amount of homework given to their children. The grade 7 parents reported that the workload regarding homework activities was far too much for the learners. This finding was similar to the grade 3 parents' report about the amount of homework given. They also stated that their children received homework from more than one teacher and this placed unnecessary pressure on the learners. Here are a few of their comments:

...It is actually a lot of homework.

...Sometimes the child gets more than one teacher's homework and I feel that it is too much.

...Homework is the most important thing but it's too much work.



With regards to the sub-theme: **following a set routine after school**, it was reported by the grade 7 parent participants that their children followed a set routine after school. This can be beneficial to completing homework activities because it adds time frames to the learner's routine. Most parents reported that immediately after school their children would return home, undress, eat, relax, complete homework, complete chores, eat supper, complete homework again, bath time and then by eight o'clock-bed time. The Moslem parents also reported that their children followed a set routine after school by first attending Moslem school (to receive religious instruction) and upon their return they would engage in homework activities. All the grade 7 parents reported that their children had to be in bed by eight o'clock during the week so that they could receive at least ten hours of sleep. This finding was similar to that of the grade 3 parent interviewees. A few of the grade 7 parents' responses were:

...he go to Moslem school, come home and eat....then they sit with their books.

...come home, get undressed, eat, and start with homework.

...first do her homework then her duties.

...eight o'clock, they go to sleep

...yes 8 o'clock. On weekends maybe 10 o'clock

...after school, come home, undress, eat homework, supper, bath and sleep.

...first do homework then she go play and then maybe she's got um other duties.

With regards to the sub-theme: **challenges with regards to homework activities**, four out of the five parents reported that they experienced certain challenges when trying to assist their children with homework activities. It emerged from the interviews that the parents considered the following as challenges to homework activities: they did not understand certain homework activities given to their children because of the changes that had occurred in the school curriculum since they (parents) were scholars, being a single parent, unable to afford a tutor when they could not assist their children with schoolwork and the homework being too difficult for them to explain. Let us take a look at a few of their responses with regards to the challenges they face when providing homework support:

... not all their homework, I don't understand everything.

...most of the time I can't help them man.

...I mean their homework today, it's difficult for me.

...I'm 64 years old, you can imagine the time when I went to school.....I can't help them at all you know.

...I am a single parent you know and I sometimes can't help them.

...I want to send my child for a better education [extra lessons] the people charge you and I am a pensioner.

With regards to the sub-theme: **the level of support as the child progresses to a higher grade**, the grade 7 parents reported that they had given more homework support to their children when they (the children) were younger and more dependent on their parents for such assistance. The parents reported that when the children are in the foundation phase they are young and need to be nurtured in terms of their school work (both in reading and writing activities). The grade 7 parents mentioned that as their children got older, they seemed to become less dependent on their

parents for homework support as they (the children) progressed to the intermediate and senior phases.

Let's take a look at a few responses of the grade 7 parents:

.....a lot of support from grade 1 till grade 5.

.....the most support ...I would say grade 2.

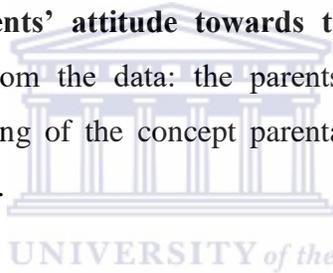
.....When she was younger I gave her more support.

...in the lower grades.

...Yes it has. In the earlier time of my child's education I think that you need to put more in because the child can do nothing.

...when they small you must teach them to read and write and to do their tables.

With regards to the theme: **parents' attitude towards the importance of education**, the following sub-themes emerged from the data: the parents' views about the importance of education, the parents understanding of the concept parental involvement and the role of the community in promoting education.



With regards to the sub-theme: **parents' views about the importance of education**, the grade 7 parent participants reported that they believed education to be important. The parents were of the opinion that education would open doors for their children with regards to their future because it would enable them to study further (go on to enrol at a tertiary institution). The parents associated education with a better life for their children because they believe it is impossible to find a decent job without an education. The parents also stipulated that education can be regarded as the building blocks for any child's future. The research also highlights the fact that all the grade 7 parents only want the best for their children with regards to education. They reported that they want their children to receive a better yet affordable education (something they [parents] had not received). They also reported that they discussed the importance of education with their children and believe that their children would have a better standard of living if they completed their schooling career. A few of their responses follows:

...To further their education meneer. Laat hy verder kan study. [To further their education sir. So that he can study further.]

...For a better future for my child
...it's the building blocks towards any child's future.
...it's impossible to find a decent job.
...Without education you go nowhere, you won't survive
...She must have a better education than me.
...for my child to get the best education possible and that is affordable.
... I always encourage them to go forward and do the best that they can.
...As Madiba said education is the key to our children's future.
...I discuss the importance of education with her all the time. I only want the best for her.

With regards to the sub-theme: **parents understanding of the concept parental involvement**, the parents reported that parental involvement was mainly limited to home-based involvement such as: assisting with homework, helping with reading activities, assisting with projects and assignments and making sure their children were in school every day. It was clear from the grade 7 parent participant responses that they believed parental involvement to be an important aspect of education. The grade 7 parent participants as well as the grade 3 parents did not link parental involvement to school-based involvement such as volunteering and supporting the school. One parent also reported that if the parents are informed on how to become involved in their children's education they would be more involved. The parents are of the opinion that if they (parents) are interested in their in children's homework then they are interested in their children's education.

...Oh you know I sit with them every day with homework. I try my best to help them but I don't understand the things [homework].
...Um parental involvement I think it's important we must be involved in your child's education like with his homework and stuff.
...I ask her everyday if she's got homework. Is the homework done.
...ons help mos met hulle huiswerk en laat ons sien dat hulle elke dag moet skool moet gaan. [we help them with their homework and make sure they are in school every day].

...I think parents try their best to become involved as far as they can. If the involvement is explained to them or made clear to them, I think that most parents who are interested in a child's homework is interested in a child's education.

...parental involvement is a good thing because if the parents are involved then there is more than one person taking part in that child's education. I help them with reading, spelling, project and assignments.

...I make sure that they are at school every day, I make sure they are well fed, I make sure they do their homework.

With regards to the sub-theme: **the role of the community in promoting education**, three of the five parents reported that the community itself did nothing to improve the quality of education of their children. The other two parents indicated that parents were involved by attending school meetings. I suspect that the latter group of parents did not understand the question in the correct context. The parents believed that some members in the community tried their best to support the children by encouraging them to go to high school. The parent participants also reported that there were very little recreational activities for the youth in the area and this contributed to the youth becoming gangsters. One parent participant indicated that he changed his life around so that his son would not become a gangster. The parent participants also reported that the lack of recreational activities in the area forced their children to join sporting clubs outside of their residential area and this incurred additional expenses. The parent participants reported that most of the children in the area were cared for by their grandparents because their parents were working. As a result the parents could not monitor their children's whereabouts and they (the children) were exposed to the negative influences of the community because their grandparents were unable to control them (grandchildren). Let's take a look at a few of their responses:

...there "is" a few people that support learning development but not a lot man.

...there is no other "dingesse" in this area...that is why our kids turn out to be gangsters .

...there is no other sport and sometimes they play cricket in the road.

...most of the children have granny's that look after them because their parents are working. They don't listen to their grandparents, they old and cannot control them.

...the recreational activities are outside of the area. Now they must travel and take a taxi.

... I made a big change in my life so I don't want them to be involved with gangsterism.

...I think they try their best in the way that they can to support their children to learn and go to high school as much as possible.

With regards to the theme: **volunteering at school**, the grade 7 parents were less willing than the grade 3 parents to volunteer their services at their children's school. Out of the five grade 7 parents who were interviewed, three indicated that they were involved in voluntary work at the school. One must bear in mind that the parents who were interviewed stated that they were unemployed. The three parents who assisted with voluntary work seemed to enjoy helping out at their children's school because they viewed it as a form of parental responsibility. The grade 7 parent participants reported that they were willing to assist with fundraising functions at the school. The three grade 7 parent participants also reported they were involved in voluntary work at school such as collecting money on a collecting list, making and selling hotdogs, attending the school dances, supporting the big walks and surf walks, cleaning the toilets at the school and attending the fun days organised at the school. Here are a few of their responses:

...if they send me a raffle then I support them.

...I attend dances and fun days.

...any function that they have I support. Like over the years they have regular functions like dances, big walks and surf walks.

...soos ek vir meneer gesê het van die hotdogs maak en verkoop...ek maak somer lekkere skoon, die toilets. [as I explained I make the hotdogs at school. I also assist by cleaning the toilets]

With regards to the theme: **communication with the school**, the following sub-themes emerged from the data: parents' relationship with the school and measures taken by the school when learners experience problems.

With regards to the sub-theme: **parents' relationship with the school**, the grade 7 parent participants reported that they had a fairly good relationship with the school as well as with their children's teachers. They also stated that the lines of communication were fairly good and that they felt comfortable enough to approach their child's teacher when problems arose.

The grade 7 parents reported that the school communicated with them on a regular basis. The parents also reported that they felt welcome at the school and would openly speak to the principal about important matters. According to the parents, the school normally informs them about fundraising events and parent meetings in the form of a letter. Here are a few of their responses:

....they send letters. Twice a month.

....by letter

....whenever there is a meeting that is being held at school and with functions and whatever activities are going on at school.

....only when here is meetings

....okay as daar meetings is [if there is a meeting]

....very seldom. If there is something that I um need to sort out at school.

....only if the child is sick.

...everybody greets us nicely, whenever we have a problem we feel free to go and speak to the principal or to the teachers concerned.

With regard to the sub-theme: **measures taken by the school when children experience problems**, the grade 7 parent participants reported that effective measures were put in place to deal with the situation. All the parents reported that specific procedures were followed to inform them about any concerns regarding their children. The parents reported that the teacher would: call them personally to the class, inform them by sending them a note in the message book, arrange special meetings with them to discuss specific issues and contacted them telephonically to set up an appointment. All issues would be dealt with in a professional manner so that the problems could be resolved. Let's take a look at a few comments:

....okay...they have a little message book and then the teacher would ask me to come and make an appointment to see her to discuss whatever the problem is.

....they will call you to the class.

....they will come to me personally or they will send me a letter.

....hulle bel vir my.[they phone me]

....well, they contact me directly and we sit down, we talk about the problem.

....the school has a letter that is part of the schools code of conduct and um.. they tick off where it is necessary for me to pay attention of what the child did.

4.2.11 Findings from the educator questionnaires

When analysing the educator's responses the following theme emerged from the data: teacher's understanding of what parental involvement entails – with the following sub-themes: the teacher's perception of parental involvement, benefits of parental involvement, encouraging parental involvement, factors that hinder parental involvement and the change in parental involvement as children progress to higher grades.

With regards to the sub-theme: **teacher's perceptions of parental involvement**, all four educators reported similar meanings to the term 'parental involvement'. According to one teacher, parental involvement entailed parents' willingness to help their children with school work and assisting with school functions. The second teacher considered parental involvement as helping children with their homework and attending parent meetings. The third teacher mentioned that parental involvement meant being involved in the child's life while they are growing up and catering for children's daily needs. The last teacher expressed that parental involvement meant being actively involved in their children's life and being committed to the school. Here are a few of their responses:

...Parental involvement is the willingness of parents to help in various aspects of their children's education and their ability to help their children with regard to school work. It also involves helping with functions/fundraisers etc. at school.

...Parents check and help with homework/research work. They attend P.T.A. meetings. They provide what the child needs for education.

...From birth, parents should be involved in their children's education. To be involved means to assist that child in every aspect of growing up until that child is able to make decisions that are beneficial to that child.

...Parental involvement is commitment and active participation of the parent in school activities and to the learner.

With regards to the sub-theme: **benefits of parental involvement**, the educators reported that parental involvement has a positive impact on the learner's academic achievement. They also agreed that there is a positive link between parental involvement and academic achievement. The educators believed that the more parental encouragement and support the child received; the more motivated and willing the child would be to achieve at school. The educators reported that parental involvement has the following benefits: the children will attain higher results, be successful at school, have a better attendance record, adopt a positive attitude towards school, engage in positive behaviour and be more willing to complete their homework activities. Let's take a look at the educator's responses:

....Yes, the more encouragement and support the child gets the more motivated and willing the child will be.

....Yes, learners whose parents are involved and interested in their progress normally achieve better results even though some learners can achieve good results and work on their own.

....Yes, meaningful parental involvement is a powerful predictor of high academic achievement.

....Yes, learners attain more educational success, they receive higher codes, complete more homework, have better attendance and have more positive attitudes and behaviours.

With regards to the sub- theme: **encouraging parental involvement**, the educators reported that if parents monitor and supervise their children's homework activities it would have a direct impact on the learner's academic achievement. The educators reported that learners, who had parents that were hands-on and involved in their schooling, would attain higher results. The educators stated that they would implement the following strategies in order to promote parental involvement: allow parents to do voluntary work in the classroom like encourage parents to read stories in the classroom, inviting parents to be guest speakers in the class (to motivate learners), help with fundraising events, acting as chaperones on school excursions, making the parents feel welcome at the school, communicating with the parents and organising workshops for parents to guide them in assisting their children with school-related activities. Here are a few of their responses:

....As an educator I can encourage parents to get involved by asking them to do voluntary work in class e.g. To read to the class, help with monitoring needs, be guest speakers, chaperone events and outings, help with fundraising and curriculum events.

....Constant contact with the parents. Monitoring of work. Draw up a daily reading programme.

....Send positive notes on behaviour, academic progress (weekly/monthly). Have workshops on subjects. Reward learners. Make the parents feel welcome at the school so that they feel they are part of the team.

....Hold workshops to show them how to assist at home. Create a positive atmosphere at school so that the parents want to assist.

With regards to the sub-theme: **factors that hinder parental involvement**, the educators reported that there were various factors that hindered parental involvement. After examining the strategies that would encourage parental involvement, it was interesting to see the educator's views on the factors that they thought would hinder parental involvement. This question had three components: ways in which parents inhibited parental involvement, ways in which educator's hindered parental involvement and the ways in which the school inhibited parental involvement. The educators reported that the following factors could inhibit parental involvement: there could be a communication problems between the parents and the learners because English (the medium of instruction) was not the parents' first language and they may experience difficulty in explaining certain tasks to their children, the communication problems could also be between the school and the parents because all correspondence from the school would not be in their (parents') mother tongue, the parents may not understand the new curriculum, parents' work commitments and the educational levels of parents. A few of the educators' responses follows:

....there is a communication problem.

....they cannot help learners as they don't understand the curriculum.

....working parents-no time for involvement.

....parents low levels of education. They don't know how to assist their children.

The educators reported that teachers were also guilty of hindering parental involvement. They believe the following factors (on the educators' part) could inhibit parental involvement. Firstly, teachers underestimated parents' ability to assist their children with schoolwork because the school was located in a poor socio-economic area and most parents came from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds and had low educational levels. Secondly, educators believed that the parents would regard them as being a nuisance if they only contacted them to discuss problematic experiences. The educators also believed that communicating certain information to the parents could be a challenge because of the language barriers that existed. Some of the parents could not effectively comprehend in English and the educators become frustrated when the parents were unable to understand them (the educators). Another factor mentioned was that teachers only saw parents at parent-teacher meetings and did not keep parents continually informed of their children's progress. If parents were continually informed about the learners progress then remediation could be implemented sooner. Here are a few of their comments:

...educators think some parents know little or nothing at all. Educators only have contact with parents at P.T.A. meetings. Some educators see it as a nuisance to report to parents all the time.

...the parents come from poor backgrounds and some cannot speak English. It is difficult to communicate with the parents-they don't understand what you are saying so you became frustrated with them.

...the teachers have a misconception of parents' abilities. Some teachers believe that parents can't help their children because they have limited educational backgrounds.

...Parents are not kept up to date with learner's progress during the term. Not inviting parents to become involved. Not making them feel welcome.

The educators reported that the school was also guilty of hindering parental involvement. The educators reported that the following school-related factors could inhibit parental involvement: the principal was not always available to see parents to discuss certain issues; parent-teacher meetings are normally scheduled around a time that was convenient to the staff only, the learners are bussed in from other areas (therefore distance is a problem between home and school), the school is situated in a sub-economic area and it is unsafe for the parents to come to school in the evenings and there are at times communication barriers between the home and school due to the

level of language used in the school's communication (some parents could not effectively understand the content of the school's letters). Here are a few of the educator responses:

...there is a lack of communication often due to language differences and parents' low educational levels.

...the principal is not easily accessible to the parents. Meetings are scheduled to early or too late in the year. Parents are not consulted about the dates and time of the meetings.

...the school is situated far for some parents and they have to travel to get to school. The school is situated in a so called dangerous area where gun shooting and violence is rife.

...the school does not involve all the parents in fundraising activities... they are selective.

With regards to the sub-theme: **change in parental involvement as children progress to the higher grades**, the educators reported that parental support declines as learner's progress from one grade to the next. The educators believed that the parents normally adjusted their support based on their children's age and scholastic abilities. The educators reported that as the learners become older they become less dependent on their parents for support. The parents have the tendency to withdraw their support to encourage autonomy, responsibility and independence in their children. Let's examine a few of their responses:

.... I think that parents start to think that their children are older and become more responsible. Parents may also think that the children understand the work better and they are more concerned about the children's social wellbeing as they progress through school.

....As the child grows older they need less parental support. More support is given in the foundation phase.

....Parents assists more in the lower grades. In the senior phase parents assume their children are now old enough to work on their own

....They give more support in the foundation phase. As the child becomes older they become more independent and therefore the parents often tend to withdraw their support.

....More support is given in the foundation phase. The learners are small and need more assistance.

4.3 Discussion of findings

The main findings of this research are discussed in terms of the research questions as outlined in Chapter 1 (section 1.4). The rationale for the presentation of the findings was to present the findings as per data collection strategy according to the participant groups as demonstrated through the analysis of data. Therefore, in this section, the discussion of findings is synthesised by attempting to answer each research question in relation to the relevant literature. A response to each research question follows.

4.3.1 Research question 1: How does parental involvement influence academic achievement of their children?

Parents are regarded as their children's first teachers and play a pivotal role in their educational career. According to this study's findings, parental involvement can positively influence the academic achievement of primary school learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background. After conducting the research with the parent participants in my study, I learned a great deal about their views with regard to their children's education as well as their opinions about parental involvement. All the parent participants in this study considered education to be important because they wanted their children to succeed in life. Education could ultimately mean a better life for their children. They realised the importance of their involvement and tried their utmost to be involved in their children's school life. The study shows that the parent participants were of the opinion that their children can acquire success in life if they have a secure job, which will only be possible if they complete their schooling career. The grade 3 and 7 parent participants from all three scholastic achievement groups (weak, average and strong) maintained this belief.

Parental *belief* in the importance of education was also confirmed by most of the learner participants. All the grade 3 learners from the strong and average scholastic achievement categories and only one learner from the weak scholastic category believed that their parents regarded education as being important. Various researchers advocate that parents' beliefs about the importance of education are incorporated into their parenting skills; which, in turn, influences their educational practices in the home. When children are exposed to their parents' belief

systems about the value of education (whether positive or negative) then they are more likely to adopt the attitude of their parents (Brody, Stoneman & Flor, 1995; Eccles, 1993; Davis- Kean, 2005). Therefore one could conclude that if the parents adopt a positive attitude toward the importance of education, the more likely it would rub off on their children.

Parent participants in this study had different views about the nature of their involvement in their children's schooling. One must bear in mind that the nature of parental assistance can be regarded as a complex phenomenon because it could comprise both positive and negative aspects. In this study, the grade 3 and 7 parent participants from all three scholastic achievement groups presented different ways in which they were involved in their children's learning experience. The parents however agreed that parental involvement entails: assisting with homework, discussing their children's school work with them, helping them prepare for a test or examination and assisting their children with projects and assignments. Research indicates that children whose parents are involved in their schooling are more likely to experience academic success than children whose parents are less involved (Hill & Craft, 2003; Marcon, 1999). By monitoring and assisting their children with school-related tasks, parents are actively participating in their children's education. This type of involvement will encourage and motivate the learner's to perform better at school (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Parents who engage in their children's education will produce successful learners because of their continual support (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

Parental involvement can be regarded as an important topic and research normally highlights the positive influence it has on the learner's academic achievements (Green *et al.*, 2007). The grade 3 and 7 learner participants expressed positive feelings about parental assistance with schoolwork such as: enjoyment, happiness, appreciation and enjoying the interaction and communication between themselves and their parents as well as appreciating parents' role as mediators of schoolwork. These positive feelings of parental involvement reported by the learner participants have the tendency to stimulate and motivate the learners to do their best at school (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler (1995) reiterate this notion and also claim that when parents convey positive feelings towards their children while engaging in school-related activities then the learners are more likely to improve their academic results.

However, some grade 3 and 7 learner participants reported some negative experiences when their parents were involved in assisting them with school tasks. These included parents expressing: impatience, frustration, as well as applying physical punishment at times whilst engaging in homework activities. The grade 3 and 7 learner participants in the study reported that their parents became impatient with them while assisting them with homework activities. It is interesting to note that children have the ability to detect and pick up on their parents' moods. According to Cohen and Brook (1998) parents need to regulate their emotions when assisting their children with school-related tasks because these emotions will spill over onto the children. These authors also believe that the parents' emotional state has an influence on how their children will manage their (children's) own emotions. When children become upset while their parents are assisting them with school tasks, the emotional turmoil might make it difficult for them to learn Gershoff (2002). Gershoff is also of the opinion that when parents are assisting with school tasks they should resist the impulse to be punitive because it is likely to worsen the situation. Physical punishment by parents during homework activities could have a negative effect on the parent-child relation which could lead to the child becoming angry and defensive (Gershoff, 2002).



The homework concept in this study is taken from the Western Cape Education Department circular 0045/2005 whereby the provincial guidelines for homework in public schools are stipulated (WCED, 2005). This document states that homework forms an integral part of the teaching process and that these learning activities should be managed by the principal, educators, parents and learners. The parent participants believed home-based parental involvement was important and they monitored their children's homework activities. Parents choose to become involved in their children's homework activities because they believe their involvement will have a positive effect on their children's learning experience (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). However, some parents are not involved in their children's homework activities because of multiple reasons such as: educational qualifications, socio-economic factors, work commitments and their inability to understand the schoolwork (Mbokodi, Singh & Msila 2003).

Among the learner participants, the weak scholastic achievement learners from both grades 3 and 7 reported that they received less homework assistance from their parents in comparison to the

average and strong scholastic achievement categories. According to Gutman and McLoyd (2000) learners who received less parental support were more likely to achieve weaker academic results than learners who received support from their parents. These authors believe that the parents, who support their children in a positive way by frequently checking their children's homework and maintaining a good relationship with the school, will produce academically successful learners. In contrast, the parents of academically weak learners have the tendency to be less supportive with regard to school tasks and seldom contact the school to discuss their children's progress.

Epstein (1997) suggests that homework activities should not be completed alone, but should be seen as an interactive activity shared with others within the home environment which could ultimately link schoolwork to real life. It is also believed that well-designed homework activities could guide and promote positive communication between the parent and the educator and the parent and the child (Epstein & Van Voorhuis, 2001). In a study conducted by Balli in Patall, Cooper and Robinson (2008), approximately 95% of the learners reported that they performed better at school when they received homework assistance from their parents. Other research studies have shown marked improvement in the learner's scholastic achievement when their parents were involved with their homework activities (Keith & Keith, 1993). These studies resonate with this study's finding reported by learner participants across both grades that the frequency of parental assistance with regards to test preparation and the completion of projects and assignments were highest among the strong scholastic achievement group and declined respectively in the average and weak scholastic categories.

In terms of parents monitoring the completion of their children's homework, all the grade 7 learners in the strong category, two learners in the average scholastic achievement category and only one learner in the weak scholastic achievement category reported that their parents monitored their homework activities. Comer (2005) refers to the supervising of homework and monitoring progress of learners by parents as an important form of involvement which has to be instilled and attained in order for it to be effective.

The grade 3 and 7 parent participants believed the homework workload was far too much for the children to cope with. Homework overload can cause learners to lose interest in the academic material and become physically, emotionally and mentally drained (Cooper *et al.*, 1998). The main purpose of giving the homework is now lost and the learners and parents become despondent. Excessive homework can also create tension between the parents and the child because it infiltrates on family time (Clemmitt, 2007).

The learners from the strong and average scholastic achievement groups reported that their parents encouraged them to read whereas the weak grade 3 and 7 scholastic achievement groups reported that their parents did not. Children who are exposed to different types of reading materials have the tendency to be better readers than those children who are not (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). It is interesting to note that both the weak grade 3 and 7 scholastic achievement groups indicated that their parents did not belong to the library. Different researchers believe that there is a definite link between literacy resources and the learners reading ability (Sheldon, 2009; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). According to Glasgow and Whitney (2009), learners who came from reading- orientated homes had the tendency to achieve higher scores on reading achievement tasks because reading materials were readily available to them and their parents were avid readers as well. All parents are responsible for exposing their children to different types of reading materials.

It also appears that some parents from the foundation and senior phase are frustrated by the fact that they cannot help their children as much as they would like to as the school work has changed since they were in school. This could be related to the fact that within the past 10 years we had two curriculum changes (CAPS) within our educational system (South Africa, DoE, 2012). Both the parent and educator participants made reference to this fact and regarded it as one of the challenges faced by parents with regards to parental homework assistance.

It was interesting to note that two thirds of the grade 3 and 7 learners reported that their mothers rather than their fathers assisted them with their homework. Most of the grade 3 and 7 learner participants reported that directly after school they usually engaged in homework activities. Many researchers believe that there is a distinction of roles between mothers and fathers with regards to parental involvement (Deslanders & Bertrand, 2005; Hanewald, 2013). The family set up could

have an influence on the dynamics of parental involvement and it is clear that the mothers' involvement seems more prominent in our society. According to Nord and West (2001), research reveals that in the traditional patriarchal society the father take on the role as provider while the mother takes care of the children. The fathers and mothers both appear to have specialised roles, with the mothers being more likely to be involved in the child's school life. These authors also stipulate that these stereotypical roles of the traditional family have changed and in a more modern family set-up the ideal would be to receive assistance in education from both the parents. Research has also shown that learners perform better academically at school if their fathers as well as their mother are involved in their education (Nord & West, 2001).

In relation to parental involvement at school, seven out of the ten parents who were interviewed, indicated that they were involved in voluntary work at the school (four parents from the foundation phase and three from the senior phase) whereas the parents who completed the questionnaire (eight participants) - all indicated that they did not have the time to do voluntary work at the school. According to Travett and McMillan (1998) parental involvement at school refers to parents volunteering their services by assisting the school and educators with educational activities such as sport, attending workshops, assisting learners and providing classroom support. According to Sanders and Sheldon (2009) the best way any parent can increase their involvement at their children's school is to volunteer their services. These authors also believe that by volunteering at the school, the parents can indirectly have an impact on their children's academic results. Eleven out of the eighteen parent participants indicated that they were fully aware of the different volunteering activities offered at the school but only seven in total were prepared to volunteer their services (seven from the interview participants). According to Lunenberg and Irby (2002), volunteering can include any activity whereby the parents volunteer their assistance at school by helping other parents, assisting struggling learners and attending functions organised by the school. The attendance of certain school functions for grade 3 and 7 participants were highest among the strong and average scholastic achievement categories and lowest in the weak achievement category. The grade 3 and 7 parent participants believed that school- based involvement was important and they indicated that they also felt comfortable when communicating with the school.

The data also indicated that both the parent and educator participants attached a different meaning and understanding to the concept of parental involvement. Davis (2004) defines parental involvement as any activity where a parent or adult caregiver participates in the child's education. The parents' understanding of the concept was limited to home-based involvement such as assisting with homework, reading, spelling, projects and assignments. The parents did not make a connection between parental involvement and school-based activities. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) believes that parental involvement takes on many forms which includes good parenting within the home, providing a safe and stable home environment, parent-child interaction, participation in school events, participation in the work of the school and in school governance which is in line with the educators' belief of parental involvement. All four educators viewed parental involvement as home-based and school-based involvement. The educators believed that home-based involvement entailed helping their children with homework, being involved in the child's life and catering for their children's basic needs. The educators viewed school-based involvement as: parents volunteering their services at school, attending and supporting functions organised by the school, attending parent-teacher meetings and being committed to the school.

A number of models of parental involvement have been developed to help explain how parents can be involved at home and at school. These include Epstein's theory of parental involvement (2008), Comer's School Development Model (2005) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theoretical model of parental involvement (2005). Most of these studies focus on parental involvement in a primary school set-up which is associated with the benefits of this type of involvement.

4.3.2 Research question 2: What roles do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's academic achievement?

It is clear from the data that the educators believe that parental involvement can influence academic achievement in a positive manner. The educators emphasised that both home-based as well as school-based involvement was important. The educators also felt that the parents should accept responsibility for their children's education by assisting them with homework activities, helping with projects and assignments and helping learners study for tests and examinations. The

educators were of the view that the parents instructed their children to do their homework but very seldom provided the actual assistance. The educators therefore believed that not all the parents utilised the 'at home activities' as a way to encourage parental involvement. This notion is supported by Sheldon (2002) who states that all parents are aware of the advantages of parental involvement and yet only some parents become involved in their children's schooling while others do not.

The educators also blamed the parents' poor socio-economic circumstances for the lack of parental involvement in schools and expressed negative feelings of frustration when parents did not get involved in their children's schooling. According to Decker *et al.*, (2007) parents may feel uncomfortable to become involved in school-based activities because they are labelled as being less interested in their children's schooling due to their poor circumstances.

The study shows that the educators wanted the parents to be actively involved in their children's education because there are many benefits to this type of involvement. Benefits to parental involvement included higher learner academic achievement, improved parent-child relationship, a decrease in truancy rate at school, improved learner attitudes, improved behaviour and a decrease in the dropout rate of the learners (Zelman & Waterman, 1998; Lemmer, 2007). The educators wanted the parents to take control of their children by showing them they were interested in their education by attending all parent-teacher meetings, volunteering their services at school, attending school functions and assisting their children with their schoolwork. A good parent-child relationship normally leads to an increase in contact with the school which could encourage the parents to become more involved at the school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parental involvement therefore leads to the educators developing a better relationship with the parents and a positive attitude towards teaching (Fan & William, 2010). When the educators receive support from the parents, they are able to broaden their perspectives and increase their sensitivity about the school's parent population and in this way gain knowledge and understandings of their learner's homes, families and communities (Kgaffe, 2001; Tan & Goldberg, 2009). This study reveals that the educators developed their own perception of the parent body without interacting with them on a personal level.

4.3.3 Research question 3: Which factors enhance and hinder parental involvement at a primary school?

Enhancing parental involvement at previously disadvantaged schools could be regarded as an important aspect in education because it could help improve the learner's academic achievement. When considering various strategies to enhance parental involvement at previously disadvantaged schools, it is important to take into account the parents' circumstances in which they find themselves (De Carvalho, 2001). One of the most important ways to improve our educational system today is by developing a strategy that would successfully enhance parental involvement at schools. The following strategies have been identified by the educators and parents as possible ways to enhance parental involvement at the school: communication between the school and the home, a welcoming atmosphere at the school and parents volunteering their services at the school.

Communication between the home and the school could be regarded as an important component of education. In this study, both the parents and the educators reported that effective communication between the school and the parents would be able to enhance parental involvement.

The grade 3 and 7 parent participants reported that the lines of communication were fairly good between the school and the parent body and that the school communicated with them on a regular basis in the form of written communication (letters). Rudolph (2007) stipulates that all written correspondence should be communicated to the parents in an easy- to-read writing style so that they (parents) are able to read and understand its content. Only two of the parent participants believed that there was a lack of communication between the school and the parents with regards to reporting on the progress of the learners. According to Obeidat and Al-Hassan (2009) it is important to contact the parents on a regular basis to discuss the progress of the child because such contact is essential for increasing the learners' academic achievement. The educator participants reported that communication was an important factor to consider when trying to enhance parental involvement strategies at the school. The educator participants stipulated that they (educators) should not only report negative information about the learners to the parents but

also highlight the positive behaviours of the learners. Gillander *et al.*, (2012) confirms that when educators report to parents that their (parents') assistance improved their children's achievement in a positive manner, then they were more likely to continue assisting their children with other school-related tasks. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) also maintain that in order to promote a positive interaction between the educators and parents, the educators should adopt a friendly attitude towards the parents. The school, on the other hand, must adopt an open-door policy for all parents.

Another way to enhance parental involvement is to make sure that the parents feel comfortable and welcome at the school. The educator participants reported that a good strategy to involve parents at the school was to make them feel welcome on the premises. The parent participants in this study reported that the educators were friendly and that they felt welcome when entering the school. Some parents also reported that they felt comfortable to approach the principal to discuss various issues that were bothering them. Collins (1995) ascertains that a warm and welcoming atmosphere at school will positively encourage parents to become involved in school-related activities. The parent participants indicated that if any problem arose at school they would go to their children's class teacher to discuss the matter. Collins (1995) also reported that when educators and parents meaningfully interact with each other, a feeling of mutual respect and understanding is developed between the two parties. Rudolph (2007) posits that a welcoming school atmosphere as well as warm school climate would encourage educators to treat parents with respect. This act would definitely encourage parents to become more involved at their children's school. The educator participants also reported that a welcoming school environment will create a positive school atmosphere.

The moment the parents adopt a positive attitude towards the school they would feel free to volunteer their services at the school. This leads us to the aspect of volunteerism at the school which could also be viewed as a factor that could enhance parental involvement.

According to Sanders and Sheldon (2009), voluntary work at school could be considered a form of parental involvement. The educator participants reported that another effective strategy to implement parental involvement would be to encourage the parents to volunteer their services at

the school. This study's parent participants reported that they understood the concept of volunteering and a few parents from the interview group indicated that they were willing to volunteer their services at the school. The parents regarded their volunteering as a form of parental involvement and they considered it (voluntary work) as their way of being involved in their children's education. Their volunteering activities took on different forms such as, making hotdogs and chip rolls, assisting in the kitchen, cleaning of the toilets, supervising a class and supporting and attending fundraising functions organised by the school. All the parents indicated that they would support functions of the school but some felt reluctant to offer their services, however this notion was not supported by their children.

Epstein (1995) states that volunteering enables the parents to understand the educator's job, experience school organisation, increase their ability to work in a school environment, expose them to the fact that parents are welcomed and valued at the school and help them develop specific skills for voluntary work. Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, (2005) findings on parents volunteering their services at school, stipulates that a general school invitation would motivate parents to be involved in their children's education. By volunteering, parents have the opportunity to observe their children in their school environment and this in turn demonstrates to their children that their parents place great value on education. Rudolph (2007) is of the opinion that by creating a family-supportive school that provides a range of family services on the school premises can be regarded as another strategy for enhancing parental involvement because when parents find that their needs are being catered for through school-based services, they are more likely to become involved.

Parents are seen as their children's first teachers and therefore they are regarded as the primary source for learning even after their children enter primary school. From the findings of the study one could conclude that the parents are faced with different challenges with regard to assisting their children with schoolwork. This has a direct impact on the parents' ability when supporting their children with school-related activities. Even though all the parent participants in the sample indicated that they tried to provide a support system for their children, this support varied from parent to parent. A discussion of the challenges to parental involvement mentioned in this study follows.

One challenge that was reported by some of the learner and parent participants was the fact that the parents were unable to assist with certain subjects. All learner participants in the grade 3 strong scholastic achievement group indicated that their parents were confident enough to assist them with all school subjects whereas only two learners from the strong grade 7 scholastic achievement categories indicated that their parents were unable to assist them with all the school subjects. The average and weak grade 3 scholastic achievement learners indicated that their parents did not like to assist them with Mathematics and Afrikaans and this was the same for the average and weak grade 7 scholastic achievement learners. According to Sheldon (2009) various studies suggest that many parents need help with regard to assisting their children with Mathematics. The reason for this result is because the parents have a lack of confidence in their own ability to assist their children with Mathematics and it is likely that these negative perceptions may be passed onto their children. Many parents regard Mathematics as a difficult subject and associate it with a strong sense of failure (Jacobs & Weisz, 1994). Therefore some parents are also afraid to assist their children with Mathematics because they fear coming across as unintelligent to their children. Biographical information provided by the parents also revealed that certain parents did not receive a high school education. According to the responses, the parent participants (those who were interviewed and those who completed the questionnaire) needed assistance on how to help their children at home. Therefore one could conclude that the parents' educational level could possibly be a factor that could hinder parental involvement. According to Strauss and Burger (2000) the parents' educational levels could influence the learner's academic achievement in a negative manner. Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) reiterate this notion by stating that the low educational levels among parents were the leading cause of a lack of parental involvement at previously disadvantaged schools. These challenges could negatively influence parental involvement in schools which is not a deliberate act on the side of the parents because illiteracy can contribute to feelings of powerlessness which make them (parents) feel uncomfortable at the school and incompetent to assist their children.

The challenges of poverty and unemployment in South African schools seem to play a major role in limiting parental involvement, especially in previously disadvantaged schools. The level of parental involvement in their children's schooling in this study may have also been influenced by

their socio-economic statuses since the school is located in a poor socio-economic area. The parent participants believed that the environment in which they live did not support or empower them (parents) to be involved in the learning of their children. The parents believe the community in which they live can be considered unsafe because of drug and alcohol abuse, gangsterism, crime and violence. The educators on the other hand were of the opinion that the parent's poor socio-economic status could be regarded as a factor that prevented them from assisting their children. The educators based this assumption on the parents' poor disadvantaged background and underestimated the parents' ability to assist their children. The parents felt that it was too dangerous to walk to school at night to attend meetings and functions organised by the school.

According to Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (2001) poor parents who fail to provide for their children's requirements avoid coming to school because they fear that the school may require them to contribute financially. Smit and Liebenberg (2003) reiterate this notion that poor parental involvement can be a direct result of the parents' socio-economic status and poverty situation. Hill and Taylor (2004) believe that it is important to first understand each community's unique barriers and resources before one could establish and maintain an effective collaboration between the home and the school. The school on the other hand must actively support parent participation by encouraging families to become major participants in their children's school life.

Another hindering factor to scholastic involvement was the nature of communication between the home and the school, which at times may be considered as a one-sided power relationship from the school to the family. In this study the parent participants reported that they had no problem with the communication system of the school and that the lines of communication were fairly good. However, the educator participants reported that the communication system of the school was effective but communicating certain information to the parents could be considered a challenge because of certain language barriers. The vast majority of the parents could not comprehend in English and the educators struggled to communicate with them (parents). Families whose mother tongue is not that of the school's medium of instruction or differs from the educators, may feel inadequate about the language difference or are unable to communicate with the educator in an effective manner (Decker *et al.* , 2007). As a result of this language

barrier some parents may find it hard to become involved and feel that they are incompetent to volunteer their services at their children's school.

4.3.4 Research question 4: How does parental involvement in children's academic progress change over time as learners progress through the primary schooling phase?

Parental involvement can be regarded as an important aspect of education and parents normally adjust their support as their children progress from one grade to the next (Cooper *et al.*, 2000). According to Hill & Craft (2003), parental support is also influenced by their children's age and scholastic needs. The transition from one grade to the next and one phase to another phase is a normal movement in the South African educational field. According to the findings in this study, the educators believed that parental support declines as the learners' progress from one grade to the next as well as from one phase to another. The parent participants also confirmed this notion by stipulating that they supported their children more in the lower grades compared to the upper grades. Hill and Craft (2003) found that parents had the tendency to be more involved in their children's early school-aged years than when their children were much older. However, one must bear in mind that parents did not retract their support completely as their children became older but altered their involvement according to their children's age. According to Hill and Craft (2003) parents naturally decrease their involvement as their children become older and adapt their involvement according to their children's age. However, these parents would become involved in their children's education if they were informed of poor academic achievement.

The grade 3 learner participants reported that they enjoyed parental assistance and that their parents displayed qualities of patience and understanding with them. However, some of the grade 7 learner participants reported that their parents displayed both positive and negative attributes while assisting them. Didier (2014) also explains that as learners become older, their need for autonomy increases and if parents do not adjust their involvement accordingly, the result could have negative implications on the parent-child relationship. Therefore Chen and Gregory (2009) believe that the most effective parental involvement during grade 7 (adolescent phase) would be developmentally appropriate assistance that would ensure educational success. According to

Griffen and Galassi (2010) parental involvement automatically decreases around the time the child reaches puberty (that is normally grade 7). One could therefore assume that the parents in this study adapted their involvement so that their children could develop some form of independence. Cooper *et al.*, (2000) concur with these authors and stipulate that parental involvement could only be beneficial to the learners if their parents adapted their involvement to accommodate their children's competence, experiences and current age. The educator and parent participants in this study collaborated the idea that parental involvement declines as the children becomes older and this notion is confirmed by various researchers such as Sirvani (2007) and Richardson (2009).

Many studies have documented the importance of parental involvement from primary school through to high school (Hanewald, 2013). However, the degree and level of the involvement by parents are not documented over the learners' entire schooling career. The nature of parental involvement changes as the learners get older and this also varies from family to family. Research has also revealed that there is a considerable amount of evidence that suggests that parental involvement is linked to school success with positive benefits to the learners, school and the wider community (e.g. Decker *et al.*, 2007). Unfortunately, parental involvement dramatically declines as the learners progress from one grade to the next and even more so as they enter high school (Hasley 2005). Even though the parents in this study reported that they decreased their support as their children became older, they still preferred to remain involved but restricted their involvement accordingly.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with data presentation and a discussion of the findings of the study. The findings of this study revealed that parental involvement can positively influence academic achievement of primary school learners. All the parent participants in the study regarded education as important and wanted their children to succeed in life. The learner participants also confirmed the notion that their parents regarded education as important. The parent participants had different views about the nature of their involvement. There was also sufficient evidence in this study to suggest that parental involvement is mostly home-based in the form of homework

assistance, supervising homework tasks, encouraging children to do and complete their homework and monitoring their children's schoolwork.

The grade 3 and 7 learner participants expressed both positive and negative feelings about their parents' involvement with regard to their homework activities. The parent participants believed home-based involvement was important and therefore they monitored their children's homework activities. The weak grade 3 and 7 learner participants reported that they received less homework assistance from their parents in comparison to the average and strong scholastic achievement groups. The grade 3 and 7 parent participants believed that the homework workload was far too much for their children. The grade 3 and 7 learner participants from the average and strong scholastic achievement categories reported that their parents encouraged them to read in comparison to the weak scholastic achievement group. The grade 3 and 7 parent participants also reported that they cannot help their children with all their schoolwork because of the changes in education since the time they were scholars. When reviewing all the data one could conclude that parents who were more involved in their children's schooling produced academically stronger learners than those who were less involved. Based on the responses in this research study the parents with a higher educational qualification also tended to have children who fell into the strong scholastic achievement category.

The grade 3 and 7 learner participants reported that their mothers rather than their fathers assisted them with homework. Seven out of the ten parents who were interviewed reported that they were involved in voluntary work at their children's school. The data also indicate that the parent and educator participants attached a different meaning and understanding to the concept of parental involvement.

The educator participants reported that parental involvement can influence academic achievement of learners in a positive manner. The study shows that the educators want the parents to be actively involved in their children's education because of its beneficial nature to academic achievement. The study also reveals that the following factors could ultimately play a role in enhancing parental involvement at a primary school: communication, a welcoming atmosphere at the school and parents volunteering their services at the school. The findings of the study reveal

that the parents are faced with different challenges with regards to parental involvement and these include: the parents' inability to assist their children, the challenge of poverty and unemployment in South Africa and communication between the home and the school. The educator participants believe parental support declines as the learner's progress from one grade to the next (and from one phase to the next). It was established that the parent participants did not withdraw their assistance completely as their children progressed from one phase to the next. Instead they adjusted their assistance according to their children's age and developmental needs. The next chapter addresses the summary of findings, the significance of the study, limitations of the study, recommendations and further recommendations for future research.



Chapter 5

Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of this study. It also includes the significance of the study, limitations of the study as well as recommendations for further research. The aim of this study was to investigate the role that parents play in their children's academic progress at a previously disadvantaged primary school.

5.2 Summary of findings

This study attempted to tap into the experiences of the educators, learners and parents at a previously disadvantaged primary school in the Cape Town area. I embarked on this journey hoping to gain a better understanding of parental involvement and how this involvement influences their children's academic achievement. The findings of this study revealed that parental involvement can positively influence the academic achievement of primary school learners.

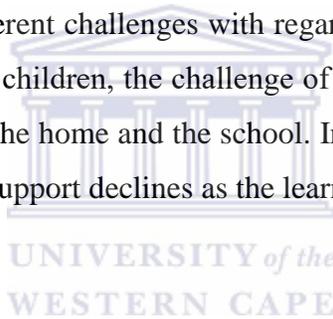
The parent participants in the study regarded education as important and wanted their children to succeed in life. They also believed that this could only be realised if their children were educated. There was also sufficient evidence in this study to suggest that the parent participants placed more emphasis on home-based involvement than school-based involvement.

The learner participants in the study expressed both positive and negative feelings about their parents' homework assistance. The weak scholastic achievement learner participants reported that they received less homework assistance from their parents in comparison to the average and strong scholastic achievement groups. The learner participants reported that their mothers rather than their fathers assisted them with homework.

The parent participants also believed that the homework workload was far too much for their children. I personally agree with the parents because educators are forced to give learners more

homework so that the school curriculum is completed within a certain timeframe. Unfortunately there is no time to consolidate previous work covered in the classroom and learners are forced to do this activity as part of their homework routine. The learner participants from the average and strong scholastic achievement categories reported that their parents encouraged them to read in comparison to the weak scholastic achievement group. The study revealed that parents who were more involved in their children's schooling produced academically stronger learners than those who were less involved.

The findings revealed that the parent and educator participants attached a different meaning and understanding to the concept of parental involvement. The study also revealed that certain factors such as: communication, a welcoming atmosphere at the school and parents volunteering their services at the school could enhance parental involvement. Additionally, the findings indicate that the parents are faced with different challenges with regards to parental involvement such as: the parents' inability to assist their children, the challenge of poverty and unemployment and the nature of communication between the home and the school. In this study, the educator and parent participants believed that parental support declines as the learner/child progress from one grade to the next.



5.3 Significance of this study

The findings of this study highlight the role that parental involvement plays in the academic achievement of primary school learners in a previously disadvantaged school. The findings in this study could potentially be used by schools to:

- ***Enhance parental involvement-*** The findings could assist the school in enhancing their parental involvement at school by looking at the factors that encourages parents to become involved in school-related activities.
- ***Improving homework assistance-*** The findings could assist the school in creating a homework support group for the parents who are unable to assist their children with home-related activities.

- ***Barriers to parental involvement-*** The findings in this study could assist the school to identify the barriers that limited parental assistance at their institution.
- ***Encouraging parents to volunteer their services-*** The findings could suggest ways on how the school could encourage their parent body to volunteer their assistance at school.
- ***Assist the learners with reading-*** The findings could encourage schools to devise ways to create a culture of reading both at school and at home.
- ***Adding to the existing body of knowledge-*** The findings of this study could add value to the existing body of knowledge on parental involvement and academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners in South Africa.
- ***Adopt an Empowerment Approach to parental involvement-*** The findings suggest that the school should adopt an empowerment approach to parental involvement within the context of schooling at previously disadvantaged schools.

5.4 **Limitations of the study**



The research study has the following limitations:

- It only focuses on parental involvement of primary school learners of one previously disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town. The findings and recommendations of this research cannot be generalised to other schools.
- Another limitation may have been the use of English as the primary major language medium that was used when conversing with the parent participants. English can be regarded as the second language of most of the parent participants even though their children are enrolled at an English medium school. During the interview sessions the researcher had to translate some of the questions into Afrikaans (mother tongue of most parent participants) and some of the questions might have lost the exact meaning when they were directly translated into the vernacular. During the interview sessions a few of the parents also responded in Afrikaans and translating their responses into English might have led to the misinterpretation of the intended meaning.
- The researcher, as a novice, may have missed opportunities to probe participant responses more thoroughly during the interview sessions due to his inadequate experience in collecting data for academic research.

- Another limitation in this research study could be that some of the parent participants might have been reluctant to provide details during the interview sessions and only reported about the good, positive aspects of their involvement in their children's schooling.

5.5 Recommendations suggested for the school that was the focus of the study

In the following section recommendations in terms of parental involvement are presented.

5.5.1 Understanding the term parental involvement

It is clear from the research findings that the educators, parents and learners all have similar; yet different meanings of the concept of parental involvement and this creates a gap in the understanding of this phenomenon. It is recommended that a holistic approach be used to empower all stakeholders at school with regards to the essence of parental involvement. This approach should incorporate Epstein's (2001) overlapping sphere of influence whereby parental involvement is seen as a collective that involves the home, the school and the community.

5.5.2 Creating a school-home working relationship

The educators assigned homework activities to the learners to practise the skills taught in the classroom and expected the parents to assist their children. However, one must bear in mind that not all the parents are capable of assisting their children with homework activities but they could supervise the activities by ensuring that their children complete the activities. Therefore it is recommended that the school should provide a parent programme whereby they can empower those parents who cannot assist their children with the necessary skills.

5.5.3 Parents volunteering at school

In this study most of the parents understood the concept of volunteering. A few of the parents were willing to volunteer their services but the majority of the parents only indicated that they

were willing to support functions organised by the school. According to Hoover-Dempsey (2005) parents are more eager to become involved in their children's education if they are motivated by the school to do so. It is recommended that the school take responsibility of informing and guiding parents on the different ways they can become involved at the school and this can be achieved by creating a parent involvement programme. It is the responsibility of the school to motivate the parents to volunteer their services by including them in decision-making and making them feel part of the school community. The School's Governing Body will play a major role in this regard because it consists of all the relevant stakeholders of a school.

5.5.4 Training educators how to utilise parental involvement

The school has to devise ways in which they can help the educators and parents develop a healthy working relationship without adding additional stress to their workload. Normally experienced educators have devised ways to involve their parents in their children's education. It is recommended that the school use this expertise to create a staff development programme by training novice educators on how to incorporate parental involvement in their teaching.

5.5.5 Creating a support group

Both the learners and the parents are in an environment that can be regarded as a previously disadvantaged community. The parents could benefit by forming a support group whereby parents who are able to assist other parents are willing to offer their assistance in this regard.

5.5.6 Improve communication between school and parents

The school has the responsibility of keeping the parent body informed about all events taking place and therefore it is recommended that an effective communication system be in place between the home and the school. Communication can be considered an essential ingredient that encourages collaboration. The school also need to ascertain which manner of communication is most acceptable for the parent body. The educators too, have an important role to play with

regards to the school-home relationship by communicating to the parents in a positive manner so that the parents feel they are working together as a team.

5.5.7 Adopt an empowerment approach to parental involvement

It was clear from the findings that a specific approach to parental involvement at a primary school was needed. The proposed approach in this study would be the Empowerment approach to parental involvement because it would seek to empower the school, parents and the community with regard to an understanding of the term, parental involvement. The most important aspect of this approach is its adjustability to the local circumstances of the school and the community it is situated in. This approach seeks to empower all stakeholders on what parental involvement entails so that a stronger partnership is established between the home and the school.

5.6 Recommendations for further research

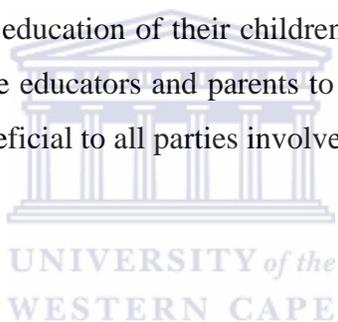
- This study did not address all aspects of parental involvement at a school and could be used as a starting point for further qualitative as well as quantitative studies of the benefits of such involvement at previously disadvantaged schools.
- This research study focussed on parental involvement and academic achievement at previously disadvantaged schools and could be conducted at a more affluent school whereby a comparison could be made.
- The value of the school, family and community partnerships with regard to parental involvement could be researched as a means to enhance involvement at all schools.

5.7 Conclusion

The study was conducted to explore the role of parental involvement with regard to the academic achievement of their children at previously disadvantaged primary school. The primary school years can be regarded as the foundation of a learner's educational journey and parental involvement can be considered a critical aspect of a child's development in relation to academic achievement. The empirical evidence from the participants in this study highlighted the fact that

the parents are faced with a wide variety of challenges that could negatively influence parental involvement of primary school learners. However, despite the various challenges, the parents are involved and the school needs to capitalise on that and make use of the opportunity to enhance and encourage this type of involvement by developing certain strategies that will enhance parent involvement.

The study confirmed that parents from a previously disadvantaged community want their children to be successful in life and they believe that education could be seen as a means to attaining that goal. It emerged from the study that most parents are involved in home-based involvement compared to school-based involvement. The development of partnerships between the home, school and community is a process that requires a considerable amount of time, resources and effort on the side of the school. Schools are faced with the task of implementing different strategies to involve parents in the education of their children. The implementation of a parental involvement programme can enable educators and parents to embrace parental involvement as a school practise which could be beneficial to all parties involved.



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APPENDIX: 1

Letter to the Department of Education requesting permission to conduct research

**THE HEAD: EDUCATION
(FOR ATTENTION: DIRECTOR: EDUCATION RESEARCH)
WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
PRIVATE BAG X9114
CAPE TOWN
8 000**

Date: 18 November 2014

Dear Sir or Madam:

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT A DEPARMENTAL INSTITUTON

I, Richard Page, a Masters student registered in the Educational Psychology Department, within the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, herby request permission to conduct research at the following school within the Western Cape Education Department.

NAME OF SCHOOL:

The school is located in the Kensington/Factreton area, which forms part of the Circuit 4 of the Central Metropole.

RESEARCH TITLE: The role that parent’s play in their academic progress at a previously disadvantaged school in Cape Town.

The research aims to provide information about the nature of parental involvement in relation to their children’s academic progress as well as to find out why parental involvement decrease as the learner’s progress from one Phase to the next.

The research approach will be qualitative in nature. The participations will be a sample of parents, educators and learners from a previously disadvantaged school in the Kensington/



Factreton area. Information gathered from participations will shed light on the nature of parental involvement pertaining to their children's schooling, particularly the support towards their children's schooling, particularly the support towards their children's academic achievement. Special attention will be given to ethical and legal prescriptions with regard to obtaining permission from all parties concerned, time frames of institutions and sensitivity of data collected. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further enquires.

Please note that I have already been granted ethical approval by the University of the Western Cape to proceed with the study subject to all other ethical protocols that I need to follow. I therefore need your approval prior to approaching the school for permission to conduct my study there.

Yours faithfully

R. Page (M.ED. student at UWC)

CONTACT NUMBER:



Supervisor : Dr Trevor Moodley
Senior Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education,
University of the Western Cape
E Mail: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za



APPENDIX: 2

Letter to the school in the Kensington/Factreton area requesting permission to conduct research.

THE PRINCIPAL: _____ **Primary School**

WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

DATE:

Dear sir or Madam

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT DEPARTMENTAL INSTITUTION

I, Richard Page, a master's student registered in the Educational Psychology Department, within the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, hereby request permission to conduct research at your school.

Research title: The role that parents play in their children's academic progress at a previously disadvantaged school in Cape Town.

The research aims to provide information about the nature of parental involvement in relation to their children's academic progress as well as to find out whether the nature of parental involvement changes as the learners progress from one phase to the next.

The research approach will be qualitative in nature. The proposed participants will be 3 groups: a sample of parents, educators and learners from grade three and seven. I hope the school administration will allow me to recruit nine learners from grade 3 and nine learners from grade 7 to complete a questionnaire. Due to the nature of study, I also hope to recruit the parents of these learners to avail themselves to a face to face interview with the researcher. All educators in Grade 3 and 7 will be asked to complete a questionnaire and they will be guaranteed that all ethical considerations will be taken into account.



If approval is granted, the research will be conducted in the first term of 2015 at the school over a 4 week period. Learner participants will be required to complete a questionnaire in a classroom on the school site after school. Parents participants will be required to engage in a face to face interview with the researcher and the venue would most likely be on the school premises. A convenient time will be worked out between the school management team and the researcher. Educator participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire at home and this process will take no longer than 2 days.

The research will shed light on the various forms of parental involvement from previously disadvantaged communities and its influence on the academic achievement of their children. A general summary of findings will be issued to the school and the information could be used to promote parental involvement. I guarantee confidentiality of information and will not reveal anything of a personal or compromising nature. If I intend to use information that is in anyway sensitive I will seek the permission of the originator before using it. There will be total confidentiality of learners, educators and parents and I will not name the school.

Please note that I have already been granted permission to conduct the study by both the University of the Western Cape as well as Western Cape Education Department. However, I will only proceed with the invitation of potential participants from within your schools teacher, parent and learner community once you are satisfied with the study aims and you have given me written consent.

Special attention will be given to ethical and legal prescriptions with regard to obtaining permission from all parties concerned, time frames of institutions and sensitivity and data collected. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further enquiries.

Yours faithfully

R. Page (M.ED. student at UWC)

CONTACT NUMBER:

Supervisor : Dr Trevor Moodley

Senior Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape

E Mail: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za



APPENDIX: 3

LEARNER ASSENT FORM FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION

I, the undersigned give assent to participate in the research undertaken by Richard Daniel Page, a Masters student at the University of the Western Cape. I understand the information about the study provided in the covering letter and I have, of my own volition decided to participate in the study.

I have also been assured that all ethical practices as it pertains to research as outlined below will be upheld. As a participant in the study I hereby acknowledge that:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. He has also assured that all the information obtained from me as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.
2. I hereby give permission for a questionnaire to be administered to me.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
4. I understand that all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information provided will be used strictly for research purposes.

Name in print: _____ Signature: _____

Date:___

For further enquiries, you may contact the researcher or his supervisor through the contact details given below:

The Student: Mr. Richard Daniel Page

E-mail: rpage@telkomsa.net

Telephone number:.....

Supervisor : Dr Trevor Moodley

Senior Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape

E Mail: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za



APPENDIX: 4 A

PARENT CONSENT FORM FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION

I, the undersigned give consent to participate in the research undertaken by Richard Daniel Page, a Masters student at the University of the Western Cape. I understand the information about the study provided in the covering letter and I have, of my own volition decided to participate in the study.

I have also been assured that all ethical practices as it pertains to research as outlined below will be upheld. As a participant in the study I hereby acknowledge that:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. He has also assured that all the information obtained from me as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.
2. I have given him permission to interview me on my parental involvement skills.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
4. I understand that all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information provided will be used strictly for research purposes.

Name in print: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

For further enquiries, you may contact the researcher or his supervisor through the contact details given below:



The Student: Mr. Richard Daniel Page

Supervisor : Dr Trevor Moodley

Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape

E Mail: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za





APPENDIX: 4B

EDUCATOR CONSENT FORM FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION

I, the undersigned give consent to participate in the research undertaken by Richard Daniel Page, a Masters student at the University of the Western Cape. I understand the information about the study provided in the covering letter and I have, of my own volition decided to participate in the study.

I have also been assured that all ethical practices as it pertains to research as outlined below will be upheld. As a participant in the study I hereby acknowledge that:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. He has also assured that all the information obtained from me as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.
2. I am prepared to complete a questionnaire about my views on parental involvement.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
4. I understand that all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information provided will be used strictly for research purposes.

Name in print: _____ Signature: _____

Date: ____

For further enquiries, you may contact the researcher or his supervisor through the contact details given below:

The Student: Mr. Richard Daniel Page

E-mail: rpage@telkomsa.net

Telephone number:.....

Supervisor : Dr Trevor Moodley
Senior Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape

E Mail: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za



APPENDIX: 5

PARENT/GUARDIAN/CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM FOR LEARNER PARTICIPATION

I, undersigned give to participate in the research undertaken by Richard Daniel Page, a Masters student at the University of the Western Cape. I understand the information about the study provided in the covering letter and I have, of my own volition decided to participate in the study.

I have also been assured that all ethical practices as it pertains to research as outlined below will be upheld. As a participant in the study I hereby acknowledge that:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. He has also assured that all the information obtained from me as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.
2. I am prepared to complete a questionnaire about my views on parental involvement.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
4. I understand that all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information provided will be used strictly for research purposes.

Name in print: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____



For further enquiries, you may contact the researcher or his supervisor through the contact details given below:

The Student: Mr. Richard Daniel Page

E-mail: rpage@telkomsa.net

Telephone number:

Supervisor : Dr Trevor Moodley

Senior Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education

University of the Western Cape

E Mail: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za

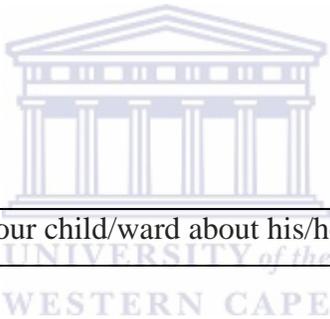


APPENDIX: 6

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENT PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for allowing me to have this consultation with you. As my letter of introduction indicated, we will be speaking about the role of parental involvement in their children’s schooling. Please be assured of anonymity and confidentiality. I will not reveal your identity to any other party including the school. Also remember that you can withdraw from the interview session at any time and you also have the right to refuse to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

PARENTING

1. What are your expectations with regards to your child’s/ward’s education?
Response: 
2. Do you have discussions with your child/ward about his/her schoolwork?
Response:
3. Share your thoughts about the importance of education.
Response:
4. What do you think about the concept of parental involvement in education?
Response:

5. Describe how you are involved in your child's/ward's education.
Response:
6. Describe the ways you support your child/ward with his/her schoolwork.
Response:
7. Does your child/ward follow a set routine after school? Elaborate.
Response:
8. What time does your child/ward go to bed most evenings during the week?
Response:
10. How many hours of sleep does your child/ward get per night?
Response:



COMMUNICATION

1. How often does the school communicate with you? What is your opinion about the communication system of the school.

Response:

2. State the methods of communication. Please explain?

Response:

3. How often do you contact the school per month? State the reason/s for such communication.

Response:



4. Describe your relationship with your child's /wards current teacher.

Response:

5. Describe your relationship with the other teachers on the staff over the period your child/ward has been enrolled at the school.

Response:

6. How does the school inform you if your child/ward experiences problems at school?
Response:
7. How is/are the problem/s resolved?
Response:
8. Describe a few of the types of problems you have encountered when contacting the school to discuss any issues your child/ward might be experiencing?
Response: <div data-bbox="646 842 976 1163" data-label="Image"> </div>
9. Do you feel that the school is attempting to reach out to you as a parent to develop a partnership with you? Please explain.
Response:
10. Suggest ways the school could improve their communication abilities with you.
Response:

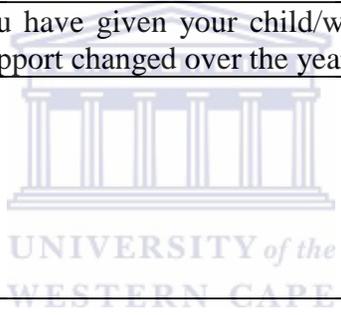
VOLUNTEERING

1. Do you volunteer your services at the school? If so, please state the nature.
Response:
2. Are you involved in any school events? If so, what events?
Response:
3. Are you involved in fundraising at the school? If so, what do you do?
Response:
4. Do you attend and support certain functions organised by the school? Please give a reason for your answer.
Response:
5. Do you feel welcome at the school? Please give a reason for your answer.
Response:
6. Suggest ways the school could further encourage you as a parent to be part of their team.
Response:

LEARNING AT HOME

1. What do you think about the type of homework given to your child/ward?
Response:
2. How do you feel about the amount of homework given to your child/ward?
Response:
3. Do you have a positive or negative attitude towards your child's/ward's homework? Please explain.
Response:
4. Do you assist your child/ward with his/her homework? Please explain.
Response:
5. Do you monitor your child's /ward's homework and ensure that he/she completes it? Elaborate.
Response:
6. Are you aware of your child's/ward's academic strengths and weaknesses? Please explain.
Response:

7. Do you have discussions with your child/ward about the importance of education? Elaborate.
Response:
8. What challenges do you face in providing homework support for your child/ward? Explain the various challenges.
Response:
9. If you look at the support you have given your child/ward over the years in terms of academic work, has this support changed over the years? Please explain.
Response:



DECISION MAKING

1. Do you participate in any parent associations at the school, such as - the SGB, Fund Raising committee, Sport committee etc.?
Response:
2. Are you aware of the school governing body and their functions?
Response:

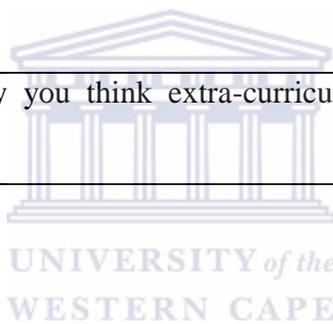
3. Are you aware of the roles and responsibilities of the school governing body?
Response:
4. Have you attended any meetings with the school governing body?
Response:
5. Are you prepared to serve as a member of the school governing body?
Response:



COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY *Y of the*

1. Are you a member of any community associations? Example, neighbourhood watch, rates association sport etc.?
Response:
2. Are you a member of the local library in your area?
Response:
3. Is your child/ward a member of the library?
Response:

4. What recreational activities are for the youth in your area?
Response:
5. Is your child/ward involved in recreational activities in your area?
Response:
6. State any other extra-curricular activities that your child/ward is engaged in.
Response:
7. Stipulate a few reasons why you think extra-curricular activities are important for educational development.
Response:
8. Do you think the community itself supports learning and development in your child/ward? Please explain.
Response:



Name in print: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor : Dr Trevor Moodley

Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education

University of the Western Cape

E-Mail: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za

APPENDIX: 7

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHILD'S EDUCATION

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information on parental involvement. The term parental involvement means any way in which an adult, meaning the person under whose supervision the child is, is involved in the education of the child. According to Trivette and Anderson (1995), the four components of parental involvement are:

- Parental aspirations for children's education
- Parent-child communication about school
- At home involvement
- Parental participation in school related activities

The overall objective of this questionnaire is to gather information on how parental involvement influences academic achievement of primary school learners. The information being sought by this questionnaire is for research purpose only. Confidentiality of information will be maintained and respondents are not asked to identify themselves by name. Please provide as much accurate information to each question or statement as possible.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Instructions to respondent

Indicate by an X in the appropriate column.

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1. Marital status | single: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | married: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | divorced: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | widow: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | widower: | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Gender: male:
female:
3. Your relationship to the learner: parent:
guardian:
sibling:
grandparent:
relative:
other:
4. Educational qualifications: Grade 7:
Grade 8 - 11:
Grade 12:
Post Matric:
5. How many people live in your household including yourself? _____
6. In what grade is your child? Grade: 3
Grade: 7



AT HOME INVOLVEMENT

Instructions

Please indicate by marking an X in the appropriate column

HOME BASED INVOLVEMENT	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
1. I discuss my child's school day with him or her.				
2. I supervise my child's homework.				
3. I assist my child with his or her homework.				
4. I listen to my child's reading at least once a week.				
5. I practice spelling skills with my child.				
6. I have a routine put in place for my child after school.				
7. I am at home in the morning before my child goes to school.				

8. I monitor that my child's homework is completed for the following day.				
9. I help my child to study for a major test or exam.				
10. I regularly look through my child's school books.				

AT SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

Instructions

Please indicate by marking an X in the appropriate column.

SCHOOL BASED INVOLVEMENT	YES	NO
1. I know my child's teacher.		
2. I know the principal and secretary of the school.		
3. I attend certain functions organised by the school.		
4. I try to avail myself to assist at school.		
5. I volunteer for various school activities.		
6. I belong to the fundraising committee of the school.		
7. I attend all meetings to discuss the progress of my child.		
8. I attend the budget meeting annually.		
9. I am a member of the SGB.		
10. I am prepared to volunteer my services to assist learners who are struggling.		

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Instructions

Please indicate by marking an X in the appropriate column.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	YES	NO
1. I know all about volunteering activities at my child's school.		
2. I know all about the fundraising events taking place for the year.		
3. I feel free to contact the school at any time.		
4. I am able to assist my child with his or her school work.		
5. I feel free to contact my child's teacher to discuss any situation.		
6. I understand all the subjects my child is doing at school.		
7. I am aware of assessment requirements of my child for the year.		

8. I assist my child with projects and assignments.		
9. I am a member of the SGB.		
10. I assist by giving advice / skills, or offering my services to the school		

Thank you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire. Kindly return the questionnaire to the school.



APPENDIX: 8

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNER PARTICIPANTS

Questionnaire to determine parental involvement in the learner’s education.

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

As part of a Master’s study this questionnaire seeks your views regarding parental involvement in children’s progress in education at a primary school level. Your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality in keeping with research ethics. Kindly answer the questions as fully and honestly as possible. Thank you for your voluntary participation. Please do not hesitate to ask the researcher for clarity regarding any of the questions.

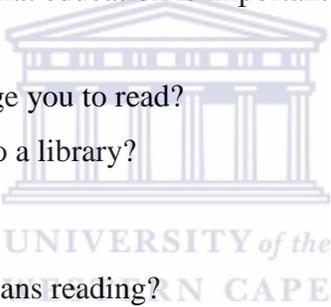
School and home involvement.

Instructions to respondent:

Please indicate by marking an X in the appropriate column.

1. What is your current grade?	3	7	
2. Do you receive any assistance with regard to your homework?	Yes	No	
3. Who assists you most of the time with your homework?	Mother	Father	Other
	If other, what is their relationship to you? _____		
4. Do you benefit from the educational support given to after school? If yes, please explain.....	Yes	No	
5. Are your parents/guardians capable of assisting you with your homework?	Yes	No	Sometimes
6. Do your parents/guardians listen to you reading aloud?	Yes	No	Sometimes
7. How many times a week does you read to your parents/guardians?	Yes	No	Sometimes
8. Do your parents/guardians assist you when studying for a test or exam?	Never	Always	Sometimes
9. Do your parents/guardians assist you with projects and assignments?	Never	Always	Sometimes
10. Do your parents/guardians discuss the importance of school with you?	Never	Always	Sometimes
11. Have your parents/guardians met your class teacher?	Never	Always	Sometimes
12. Do your parents/guardians attend school meetings pertaining to your progress?	Yes	No	Sometimes
13. Do your parents/guardians attend functions organised by the school?	Yes	No	Sometimes

- 14. Do your parents/guardians volunteer their assistance at any school functions?
- 15. Do you follow a set routine at home after school?
- 16. Do you have a set time every day when you do your homework in the afternoon?
- 17. How long do you take to complete your homework?
- 18. Do your parents/guardians ask whether you have homework every day?
- 19. Do you have educational games at home such as puzzles, Lego, scrabble, computer software/programmes?
- 20. Do your parents/guardians believe that education is important?
- 21. Do your parents/guardians encourage you to read?
- 22. Do your parents/guardians belong to a library?
- 23. Do you belong to a library?
- 24. Do you observe your parents/guardians reading?
- 25. Do you visit cultural heritage sites with your parents/guardians?



Yes	No	Sometimes
Yes	No	Sometimes
	Yes	No
Less than an hour		More than an hour
Yes	No	Sometimes
	Yes	No
Yes	No	I don't know
Yes		No
Yes		No
Yes		No
Yes	No	Sometimes
Yes	No	Sometimes

26. How do you feel when your parents/guardians assist you with your homework?

27. What do you like about your parents'/guardians' assistance? Please explain.

28. What don't you like about your parents' /guardians' assistance?

.....
.....
29. Which subjects do your parents/guardians enjoy assisting you with, with regard to your homework?

.....
.....
30. Which subjects do your parents/guardians not like that much when assisting you with your homework?

.....
.....
Thank you for completing the questionnaire



APPENDIX: 9

EDUCATOR QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE HOW PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT INFLUENCES THE CHILD'S ACADEMIC PRGRESS:

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

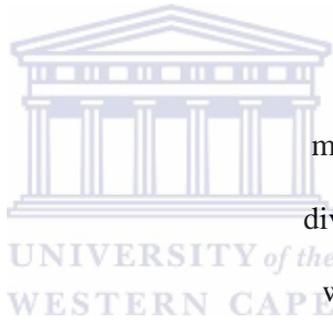
As part of a Master's study this questionnaire seeks your views regarding parental involvement in children's progress in education at a primary school level. Your responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality in keeping with research ethics. Kindly answer the questions as fully and honestly as possible. Thank you for your voluntary participation.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Instructions to respondent

Indicate by an X in the appropriate column.

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Marital status | single: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | married: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | divorced: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | widow: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | widower: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Gender: | male: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | female: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Which grade do you teach? | Grade 3: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Grade 7: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Indicate your highest qualification: | matric + 3: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Matric + 4: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Postgraduate degree: | <input type="checkbox"/> |



SECTION B: EDUCATOR'S VIEW ON THE ROLE PARENTS PLAY IN THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN

1. What is your understanding of the concept *parental involvement in children's education*? Please explain.

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. What are the benefits of parental involvement?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. What challenges do you face as an educator with regard to parental involvement in children's schooling?

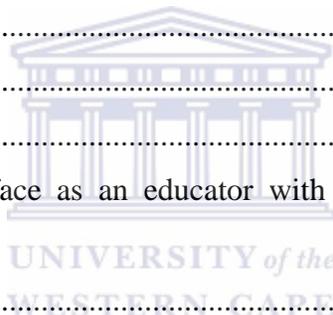
.....
.....
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.....

4. How do the parents of the learners you teach involve themselves in their children's education?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Do you think these parents are equipped to be meaningfully involved in their children's education? Motivate your answer.

.....
.....



10. Do you suggest ways to parents on how they can support their children? Yes? No?

10.1 If yes, please explain.

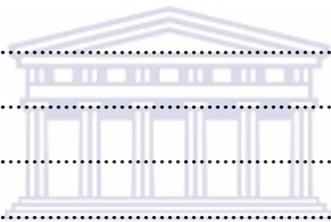
.....
.....

11. What type of parental involvement would you prefer in the subjects you teach?

.....
.....
.....
.....

11.1 List a few examples to support your comments in question

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



12. What do you think parents should not do in the name of parental involvement?

.....
.....
.....
.....

13. Based on your experience, kindly identify barriers or challenges to parental involvement in the following categories:

13.1 The school

.....
.....

13.2

The parents

.....
.....

14. Generally speaking, in what ways do parents inhibit parental involvement?

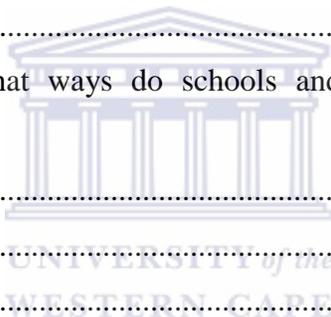
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15. Generally speaking, in what ways are you as the educators guilty of hindering parental involvement?

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16. Generally speaking, in what ways do schools and school governing bodies hinder parental involvement?

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17. What role do learners play in facilitating or hindering parental involvement?

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18. In your opinion is there a link between parental involvement and academic achievement?
If so, elaborate.

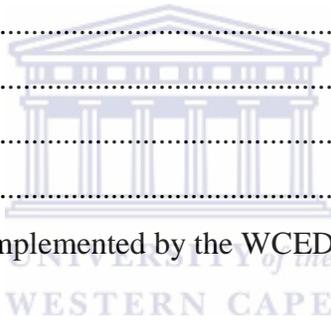
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19. What strategies can be implemented by you as an educator to encourage or enhance parental involvement to boost academic success?

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20. What strategies should be implemented by the school to encourage parental involvement?

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21. What strategies should be implemented by the WCED to enhance parental involvement in schools?

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22. What can be done to assist parents to help their children improve their academic progress?

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23. Based on your experience as an educator do you feel that parents reduce their support in their children's schooling as they progress from one grade to the next? Elaborate.

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24. In which phase do you think the most parental involvement should be?

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24.1 Please explain.

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Thank you for your co-operation



Appendix 10



Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20150130-42708
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Richard Page
29 Van Passel Street
Bothasig
7441

Dear Mr Richard Page

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE ROLE PARENTS PLAY IN THEIR CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PROGRESS AT A PREVIOUSLY DISADVANTAGED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

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 **02 February 2015 till 15 March 2015**
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: 30 January 2015

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: 0865902282
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
www.westerncape.gov.za

Appendix 11

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Private Bag X17, Belville, 7535
South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 21 959 2275
Fax: +27 (0) 21 959 2647
Email: stowfie@uwc.ac.za

**THE HEAD: EDUCATION
(FOR ATTENTION: DIRECTOR: EDUCATION RESEARCH)
WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
PRIVATE BAG X9114
CAPE TOWN
8 000**

27 January 2014

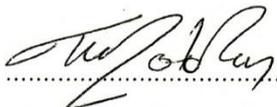
Dear Sir/Madam

This letter serves to confirm that I am supervising the academic study being undertaken by Mr Richard Page. He is currently registered for the Masters Degree in Educational Psychology, in the Educational Psychology Department, within the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape. The title of his proposed study is: **The role that parent's play in their children's academic progress at a previously disadvantaged school in Cape Town.** To my knowledge, the student has already submitted an application to your office to conduct research at a public primary school during the course of 2015.

Hoping that the above suffices. Please feel free to contact me should you require further information or clarification.

Thanking you

Yours faithfully



.....

Dr. Trevor Moodley
Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
E-mail: tmoodley@uwc.ca.za
Mobile: 072 389 2795



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Appendix 12



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

OFFICE OF THE DEAN DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

17 November 2014

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:
Mr RD Page (Education)

Research Project: The role that parents play in their children's academic progress at a previously disadvantaged primary school in Cape Town.

Registration no: 14/9/59

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
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E: pjosias@uwc.ac.za
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to action through knowledge