

An Assessment of Teacher-Parent Collaboration in Promoting Quality Teaching and Learning in the Foundation Phase: A Case Study of Sibasa Circuit Primary Schools, Limpopo Province

By

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DECLARATION

I Murumwa Ndifelani Bridgettte, confirm that this research for Master of Education, which I have submitted at the University of Venda has not been previously submitted at any other University: it should be known that it is my work and that all reference material has been acknowledged.

Signature..... Date.....

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my departed mom Muofhe Sarah Siliga for her inspiration and support during my studies.

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ABSTRACT

The South African legislation through the constitution and the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 allows for parents make meaningful contribution towards their children's school activities. In many countries, including South Africa, one of the strongest trends in education reform has been to give parents and community members, an increased role in governing schools. Lack of parental involvement has been identified as an obstacle in many primary schools in South African, particularly among the lower socioeconomic groups. As an educator, the researcher noticed that many learners in the Foundation phase either fail to do their homework or partially complete them due to lack of assistance and supervision back home. The study assessed teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase in primary schools in Sibasa circuit of Limpopo Province. The researcher used a qualitative case study approach and employed semi-structured interviews and observation checklist to obtain data. A total of 4 primary schools with Foundation phase were purposively selected for the study. A total of 4 principals, 13 educators and 21 parents were purposively selected and interviewed for the study. Content analysis was used as the main method of data analysis. It involved identifying, coding and categorizing the primary patterns of data. The data in this study consisted mainly of individual interview transcripts and observations checklist. The findings indicated that the involved schools are not well resourced in terms of infrastructure. Based on the interviews, the benefits of parental involvement at the Foundation phase are well appreciated by the principals, educators and parents and despite that appreciations, barriers to effective parental involvement were evident. These included parents low level education status, broken families, inadequate resources in schools, inadequately prepared teachers in terms of parental involvement and poor communication between schools and parents. It was thus recommended that all stakeholders put measures and programmes in place for successful and effective parental involvement particularly for learners in the Foundation phase for better educational outcomes.

Keywords: *Parental involvement, educators, learners, parents, foundation phase.*

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“Well, if the family is the mother of the social group, then the school is the godmother of social development: parents, learners and teachers form an inevitable triangle of educational development.” – (Carlos Fuentes, 1997:84)

1.1 BACKGROUND

School success requires a broad-based effort by the entire community, including educators, learners, parents, law enforcement agencies, businesses, and faith-based organizations, among others. Abundant of research over the past three decades points toward the notion that children whose parents share responsibility of their education with schools have stronger academic outcomes and social readiness for entering their most productive years (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003). Furthermore, higher levels of parent involvement also correlate positively with children's mental health, social functioning (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007), emotional growth (Patrikakou, 2005), and lower rates of academic failure, repetition, and dropout (Gertler, Patrinos, & Rubio-Codina, 2007). As such, the role of families in their children's education has been the discussion for educational policy initiatives at a global level. Development agencies such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have advocated for decentralization in education as a means of getting parents more directly engaged in improving learner outcomes (Gunnarsson, Orazem, Sánchez & Verdisco, 2008).

The impact of teachers and parent collaboration in school reform has been an issue of exploration for several scholars (Brown & Anfara, 2003). Many urban schools across the country are building models of school reform that recognize parents as a critical factor to achieve learner and school success. However, research shows that espoused theory represented in national policy has not always translated into implicit theory-in-use (Lewis & Naidoo, 2004) as tensions arise between traditional values and contemporary reforms (Walker, 2007). This divergence between policy and practice may arise when

"an attractive goal, articulated in the context of one set of democratic principles, is transplanted to another setting where its implementation may introduce dissonance in the existing ecology of values" (Louis, 2003: 102). If the educational policies fail to fit the context of the countries, it may result in their rejection or lack of implementation (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

Teachers and parent collaboration in academic institutions have been greatly hailed for their success and diverse benefits. Good school, family and community partnerships lead to improved academic learner achievement, self-esteem, school attendance and social behaviour. Parents and teachers experience mutual support and satisfaction in achieving positive changes in children and the school. Resources available to children, teachers, parents and the school are expanded and useful collaboration with community agencies are established (Swap, 1993:1). These benefits place parents' involvement firmly on the national reform agendas of most education authorities. However, definitions of parent teachers' collaboration vary greatly. Schools and families seldom share the same perspectives on what is wanted or needed. Moreover, government rhetoric and education department policies are not always equally matched by effective site-based implementation. Although parent and teachers' collaboration is linked to school success, schools frequently fail to establish strong links between home and school and parent participation is not significant in many schools even where parents are invited (Chrispeels, 1992:2).

In many countries, including South Africa, one of the strongest trends in education reform has been to give parents, and in some cases community members, an increased role in governing schools. This pattern of reform often disappoints in achieving the range of expected outcomes. A considerable body of evidence suggests that changes in governance arrangements are only weakly related to teaching and learning and thus do not improve learner achievement. It appears that relatively few parents are actively involved and that involvement may drop off after the first few years (Levin, 1997:262). Moreover, the preference of most parents is not for involvement through school governing bodies (SGBs) but for involvement in their own children's learning (Epstein, 1995). On the 9th of March 2017, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)

morning live (0800am morning news), the authorities broadcasted the “I TRACKING” cell phone software program in which parents are made to become involved in learners’ and learners’ work as they will be able to track their children’s results.

Teachers collaboration with parents in promoting quality teaching and learning is an effective and most important resource needed to improve learners’ academic performance. Goldberg (1997:87) defines that parent collaboration is a concept that means the engagement of parents and guardians of learners in their studies. Parents form a partnership with teachers so that teachers find it easier to teach learners. Parent teachers’ collaboration is based on the reciprocal exchange of information, teaching methods and approaches between parents and teachers that are needed to improve academic performance on the part of learners.’ Gallagher, Bagin and Moore (2005:130) are of the understanding that parent teachers’ collaboration is an important aspect in the teaching-learning process because it provides teachers with support and other necessary resources. Parents’ presence at school must be enhanced. That is, parents’ collaboration with teachers in their children’s education is one of the most effective measures to improve learners’ academic performance and establish and maintain the safety and security standards at schools. Parents are the primary teachers to the learners. In the context of this understanding therefore, teachers must obtain adequate information from parents which they process for the purpose of providing learners with an education.

With regards to the teaching-learning processes, Beveridge (2005:76) contributed a number of models through which parents can collaborate with teachers take place at school, namely; morning meetings, parent conferences, parent visits, parent representatives, invitational visitation, invitation of committees of parents, personal invitation from teachers, checklists, principal’s invitation of parents with new children and individual contact. In this regard therefore, teachers must always involve parents in the education of their respective children. Parents must be seen as willing to take an active part in the school activities. Louis, Otto and Slovi (2002:112) contend that parents have long been an essential part of the classroom. With this background laid, this study intended to assess teachers and parents’ collaboration in promoting quality

teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase (FP) at primary schools in Sibasa Circuit, Limpopo Province of South Africa (SA).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Teacher-parent none collaboration in promoting quality teaching and learning is a major problem. There is no effective teaching and learning, learners become indiscipline of which creates poor performance and also the infrastructural development of the school lags behind. Esquivel (1995) argues that problems can occur when frustrated parents feel that schools are not fulfilling their obligations to prepare their children for a life better than their own, or when they do not feel valued by teachers. Also, the lack of common goals, values, or attitudes between parents and teachers brews frustration which consequently cause parents to retreat and ignore their right to participate more actively at schools. On the other hand, teachers may feel frustrated with whom they perceive to be disinterested parents who do not engage or support in the educational processes of the learner (Souto Manning & Swick, 2006). Resultantly, because of the clashes between teachers and parents, learners end up not receiving necessary support and they suffer from an early age and do not achieve the goals of their academic careers as they lose trust in school and feel neglected. Therefore, this study sorts out to investigate and assess teacher-parent collaboration in promoting quality teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to assess teacher-parent collaboration in the primary schools in the Foundation Phase.

The study was also guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the relationship between the teachers and parents in the Foundation Phase education.
- To explore barriers to teachers-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase.
- To come up with the expectations required of teachers-parent collaboration.

- To describe the strategies that can be used to promote teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

- How are teachers and parents collaborating in promoting teaching and learning the Foundation Phase?
- What is the relationship between teachers and parents in the Foundation Phase?
- What barriers exist in teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase?
- What are the teachers and parents' expectations for teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase?
- What strategies should be implemented to promote teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase?

Ineffective collaboration between teachers and parents can be a major obstacle in the education of the children. Therefore, without parents, children's education cannot be enhanced. The problem statement signifies the basis for rethinking parents and teachers' collaboration in foundational phase.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is important that key expressions or terms used in the study be defined. The definitions below are key terms used in the entire study:

1.5.1 Foundation Phase (FP)

The term 'Foundation Phase' refers to Grades R-3 and includes learners from six to nine years of age. This is a four-year phase, starting with the Reception year. The Learning programmes which are important in this phase are Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. It is a very important phase in establishing the basis on which learners will grow in normal schooling.

1.5.2 Collaboration

In this study, collaboration refers to a comprehensive strategy whereby various strategies are employed, and it offers equal opportunities for all stakeholders to make inputs and are regarded as equal partners in curriculum supervision (Department of Basic Education, 2010:76).

1.5.3 Teaching

Refers to a process which facilitates transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes from expert to learner (Saiyad, Mishra, Rimal, George and Kaur, 2018:24). It is the process that involves making connections, identifying patterns, and organizing previously unrelated previously unrelated knowledge.

1.5.4 Learning

According to Mwamwenda (1995:18) defines learning as “continuous process lasting from the moment a person is born to the end of his life, it also involves a change in behaviour as a result of what a person has experienced which is depicted by the way a person think (cognitive) acts psychomotor or feels (effective)”.

1.5.5 Attitude

Attitude is the way a person views something or tends to behave towards it, often in an evaluative way. Your attitude to something is also the way you think and feel about it, especially when this shows in the way you behave (Mwamwenda (1995:18).

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is relevant not only in Vhembe district and South Africa, but globally where teacher-parent collaboration looks to promote teaching and learning in primary schools, especially in the Foundation Phase. The findings of the study are expected to help principals, teachers, parents and the Department of Basic Education in understanding

the importance of teachers' collaboration with parents in schools, especially in the Foundation Phase.

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Limitation is the potential weakness in the study and out of control. Delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study, Leedy and Ormrod (2010:62) assume that with delimitation, research problem cannot exist. Therefore, this study will cover Foundation Phase Circuit, Vhembe District, Limpopo province of South Africa.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are included in the study in order to protect the research participants from being harmed. Ethical considerations could be defined as guidelines and rules which the social science professions have developed in order to protect the research participants from being physically, psychologically and emotionally harmed by the researchers. Social scientists generally have a responsibility not only to their profession in its search for knowledge and quest for truth, but also for the subject they depend on for their work (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:56). Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better even if in the extreme case (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:56). Thus, for the purpose of this study, the researcher included confidentiality, informed consent, harm to subjects, anonymity, voluntary participation and obtaining permission from University as the most important ethical consideration concepts needed to be addressed.

1.8.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that interview contents which were collected between the interviewers and the interviewees shall not in any nature be revealed to other unauthorised individuals. Confidentiality means that only the researcher, supervisors and the research respondents know the contents of interviews. This information cannot be accessed by any other person except the researcher and the respondents. This

extends to all the information relating to a person's physical and mental condition, personal circumstances and social relationships which is not already in the public domain (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:60). Confidentiality is a promise that all participants and their identity will not be identified or presented in identifiable form (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006:295).

To ensure confidentiality, research participants were not identified by their own names and other biographic information. Pseudonyms and codes were used in order to identify research participants instead of their actual names.

1.8.2 Informed Consent

Respondents must not be coerced into participating in the study but rather they must be given freedom to give their written consent to participate. Much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and co-operation of subjects who are to assist in investigations (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:50). In that regard, a written agreement shall be made available to participants after they learn something about the research procedure (Neuman, 2000:96). Informed consent can be viewed as a contractual agreement between the respondents and the researcher. Primary school learners are indeed minors who cannot consent to the voluntary participation in the study. In this regard, no attempt was made to collect information or data from the minors. All participants were required to sign consent forms prior to their involvement. A copy of the consent form is found in Annexure A.

1.8.3 Harm to Subjects

Harm to subjects entail that no research participant will be deprived of the necessary physical, psychological and emotional harm, which are fundamental rights during their participation in the research (De Vaus, 2001). Subjects shall be protected from harm and it is for this reason, amongst others, that the researcher generally promise subjects confidentiality or anonymity in the study (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006:295). In some experimental studies participants are potentially exposed to harm. For example, in medical experiments in which a new drug is trailed, participants are potentially endangered. In psychological experiments participants might be given stimuli or be

induced to behave in ways that they later regret and find distressing (De Vaus, 2001:86). Harm to subjects means a lot more attributes such as depriving people their freedom to do things as they want, placing interviewees under harsh weather conditions, interviewing them against their willingness to do so and so on. All the afore-mentioned was adhered to, to exclude harm on the participants in this study. All the participants were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary, that they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any unfavourable consequences, and that they were not going to be harmed as a result of their participation or non-participation in the project.

1.8.4 Voluntary Participation

With regards to the issue of voluntary participation, research participants need to volunteer their willingness to participate in a research study. Deception means to lie or to tell a half-truth in order to induce another person into participating in a research study he/she would have otherwise not done so. A well-established principle of social research is that people shall not be required to believe that they are required to participate in a study (De Vaus, 2001:83). Participants were not be forced to participate in the study through any of the following ways; undue influence, misrepresentation, threat or promise of payment.

1.8.5 Obtaining Permission

Permission to carry out an investigation must always be sought at an early stage. The ethical consideration aspect of obtaining permission to conduct a research study project at school level (University of Venda Higher Degrees Committee) is an important aspect. As such, permission was sought from the authorities before the study was conducted. The researcher first obtained ethical clearance to go to the field to collect data. Permission was also sought from the participating schools and the circuit office (see Annexure B for a copy of the letter used to seek permission).

1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY

The study chapters are outlined as follows:

1.9.1 Chapter One: Introduction of the Study

This chapter provides a clear introduction and background presentation of issues of focus in the study; it also presents the problem statement; aim and objectives of the study; major research questions and the rationale of the study.

1.9.2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

The chapter traces the relevant literature, works by different authors in the discipline and linked discipline of study. This was done to ensure correlation with research questions of the study.

1.9.3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The chapter also expose the systematic discussions of the nature and type of research methods and choices. It further discusses research instruments, population and location and ethical issues and gives a clear explanation of how the study was conducted.

1.9.4 Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings and Discussions

This chapter presents the findings and provide the discussion of findings and analysis of fieldwork data.

1.9.5 Chapter Five: Conclusions, Findings and Recommendations

This chapter provides the conclusions, findings and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the literature review and theoretical framework of the study. Poole (2017:8), refers to a literature review as a scholarship review, because the process involves studying existing scholarship to see how other scholars have investigated related research problems. Literature reviewed here covers the importance of parent-teacher collaboration, barriers to teacher- parent collaboration, expectations required for parents- teacher collaboration and strategies to promote teacher-parent collaboration.

2.2 IMPORTANCE OF PARENT- TEACHER COLLABORATION

Various researchers have defined the concept parental involvement from different perspectives. Makgopa (2012:12) defines parental involvement as “...preparing children for school”. This includes activities such as, teaching children the alphabet, talking and reading to children to promote language development, attending school events, for example, parent-teacher conferences, and fulfilling any requests teachers make of parents, for example, to play word-games with their children at home (Makgopa, 2012:12). Miles (2016:1) described parental involvement as activities such as assisting a child with homework, financial support, moral support for the teacher, and emotional support for the learner.

Definitions of parent involvement vary, and include a broad array of actions, such as monitoring learners’ work progress, volunteering at schools, and helping with homework, communicating with the school personnel, advocating for academic services, and making education-related decisions (Makgopa, 2012:12). Implicit in policy and legislation that mandate parent involvement is the belief that such involvement will positively affect learners’ academic achievement, as well as their behaviour (National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), 2016:7).

A parent is the most important partner in a child’s education therefore, successful parent involvement in the child’s education means children are more likely to do better in

school, be better behaved, have more positive attitudes toward school, and grow up to be more successful in life (NECT, 2016:7). School-family and learner are the fundamentals of education systems and their close communication and cooperation is vital to gain the required results. Therefore, the school management that wants to reach success in education need to prioritize interrelations between parents and teachers in order to involve parents as well as teachers in the education programmes (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:183).

Numerous studies have shown the important role that strong positive bond between homes and schools, play in the development and education of children (Campbell, 2011:5; Pirchio, Tritrini, Passiatore & Taeschner, 2013:145; Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:139). The theories put forward have been supported, and reaffirmed, by numerous studies that had shown that good cooperation between schools, homes and the communities can lead to academic achievement for learners, as well as to reforms in education (Makgopa, 2012:12; Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:139). A number of studies have confirmed this prediction: parental involvement in children's schooling appears to be associated with a range of positive outcomes, including fewer behavioural problems and better social conduct, lower dropout rates and higher learner achievement (Pirchio, Tritrini, Passiatore & Taeschner, 2013:145).

Research has also shown that successful learners' have strong academic support from their involved parents (Sheldon, 2009:14). Furthermore, research on effective schools, those where learners are learning and achieving, has consistently shown that these schools despite often working in low social and economic neighborhoods, have strong and positive school-home relationships (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009:2; Sheldon, 2009:14). More importantly, these effective schools with positive school climate, have made a real effort in reaching out to their learners' families in order to bring about good cooperation. Sanders and Sheldon (2009:2) maintain that schools become successful when a strong and positive relationship among learners, parents, teachers and the community has been established. All learners' are more likely to experience academic success if their home environment is supportive (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009:3).

There is significant research, nationally and internationally, to suggest that parental involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement. Research to date also suggests that there is significantly more evidence of parental engagement in the early stages of primary school than in secondary schools, although parental support of learning in the home has been seen to have a significant effect on children of all ages from pre-school to 16 (Campbell, 2011:5). Đurišić* and Bunijevac (2017:139) alleges that there are many reasons for developing and establishing a partnership between school, family and community. The main reason for such a partnership is to aid learners in succeeding at school. These include improving the school climate and school programmes, developing parental skills and leadership, assisting families in connecting with others in the school and the community, and assisting teachers with their work. All these reasons emphasise the importance of parents playing an active role in their children's' education and keeping a strong and positive relationship with schools (Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:139).

School-family and learner are the fundamentals of education systems and their close communication and cooperation is vital to gain the required results. While family involvement increases academic achievement in children and teenagers, it also encourages learners to achieve and their attendance at school. Besides, family involvement improves school-family relationships, positive sides of a class and learners' tendency to study (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:183).

School-family cooperation also enables learners to have self-control and supports them to acquire noticeable educational goals (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:183). Increase in parental involvement also leads to an increase in academic achievement, better classroom behavior and conduct, greater self-esteem, increased motivation and attitude towards school, lower rate of absenteeism, and increased school satisfaction for learners (O'Donoghue, 2014:14). According to Pirchio, Tritrini, Passiatore and Taeschner (2013:145) the relationship between school and family emerges as a relevant theme since early childhood, in particular when the child attends a child-care center. In fact, recent studies point strongly to the importance of the earliest years of a child's life as a critical period for developing the basis for further learning (Pirchio, Tritrini, Passiatore &

Taeschner, 2013:145). Chindanya (2011:25) also further reiterates the universality of the significance of parental involvement. According to Chindanya (2011:25), while parents from different ethnic backgrounds may support their children in apparently different ways, the effect of such efforts is the same.

Even though parental involvement is positively linked to school success, many parents are not as involved in the schooling of their children as the teachers would like (Makgopa, 2012:12; Newchurch, 2017:22.). According to Makgopa (2012:12), research has shown that most teachers desire parental involvement and request it, particularly in the early years of schooling. Makgopa (2012:12), further notes that almost all the teachers in elementary schools encourage parental involvement and many are discouraged by what they call insufficient parent participation. Not only do researchers and educational leaders believe that parental involvement is significant, but parents and educators also agree that it is essential (Epstein et al., 2009:5). Parents want their children to succeed. Many parents are apprehensive about their children and can assist in their learning, despite ethnicity, cultural background, or socioeconomic status (Newchurch, 2017:23).

Involving parents in their children's education is gradually becoming an important feature in effective schools and despite socio-economic challenges, many African countries recognize the value of involving parents in their children's education. For instance, Ndebele (2018:2), report that some African countries, including South Africa, Uganda and Burundi, now have policies that support parental involvement in education.

2.3 EFFECTIVE TEACHER- PARENT COLLABORATION

The evidence that parental involvement has beneficial effects on learners' academic achievement is so compelling that policymakers, school board administrators, teachers, and parents all agree that parental involvement is critical for learner's academic success (O'Donoghue, 2014:13.). According to O'Donoghue (2014:14), a sustained mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school staff and families are required for a successful school-family partnerships and children's learning. Although the success of this partnership is difficult to reach, it is important to note that the benefits to learners

and their educational success depends on all parties in order to sustain the school-family partnerships. According to Santana (2014:13), critical contribution to successful learning does not derive from the home or the school alone, but from the dynamic relationship between them. In a time where class size seems to increase each year, the individual time learners get from a teacher is limited, making collaboration with parents imperative (Santana, 2014:13).

Teachers and parents impact learner achievement (Keaton, 2017:20). As one part of this, teachers and parents must work together to create a sense of community. For effective parental involvement, Epstein (2009:5), has identified a framework which containing six important factors with regards to parental involvement. This framework is based on findings from many studies of what factors are most effective with regards comes to children's education (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:186.). Those six factors are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. The strategies help parents to become involved at school and at home (Keaton, 2017:20).

Parenting

The strategy aims to teach and support parents with parenting skills, provide support for the families, understand adolescents, and support learning for all ages of learners. Parenting assists the school to set goals for learners and gain an understanding of the learner's background and heritage (Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:142; Keaton, 2017:21). Activities that support this type of involvement provide information to parents about their child's development, health, safety, or home conditions that can support learner learning. Includes: parent education and other courses or training for parents, family support programmemes to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services, home visits at transition points to elementary, middle, and secondary school (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:186).

Communicating

Communication with families about learner progress should occur between the parent and the school. Two-way communication develops between the school and the parents (Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:142; Keaton, 2017:21). Families and schools communicate with each other in multiple ways. Schools send home notes and flyers about important events and activities. Parents give teachers information about their child's health and educational history. A school website is an additional mode of communication with parents and families. Includes: conferences with every parent at least once a year, language translators to assist families as needed, regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications (Titiz And Tokel, 2015:186).

Volunteering

When schools recruit parents to volunteer at the school, the parent and the teacher become more aware of learner's needs, allowing both groups to work together to support those needs (Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:142; Keaton, 2017:21). According to Titiz and Tokel (2015:186), there are three basic ways that individuals volunteer in education. First, they may volunteer in the school or classroom by helping teachers and administrators as tutors or assistants. Second, they may volunteer for the school; for instance, fundraising for an event or promoting a school in the community. Finally, they may volunteer as a member of an audience, attending school programmes or performances. Includes: school/classroom volunteer programme to help teachers, administrators, learners, and other parents, parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families, annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.

Learning at home

Learning at home involves families being involved in the child's schoolwork and occurs when the parents are actively involved in their child's homework and other curricular activities. Teachers are encouraged to give homework that encourages learners to discuss the tasks with his or her parent (Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:142; Keaton, 2017:21). This includes information for families on skills required for learners in all

subjects at each grade, information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home, as well as family participation in setting learner goals each year and in planning for college or work (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:186).

Decision-making

Families should be included in the educational decisions of the child. Involvement in decision-making involvement can be accomplished through advocacy activities, parent meetings, or a parent organization (Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:142; Keaton, 2017:21). Decision-making activities include taking on leadership roles that involve disseminating information to other parents. This includes active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees for parent leadership and participation, independent advocacy groups to lobby for school reform and improvements, networks to link all families with parent representatives (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:186).

Collaborating with the community

To collaborate with the community, resources and services must be identified. Members of the community can include businesses, agencies, colleges, and other organizations ((Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:142; Keaton, 2017:21). According to Titiz and Tokel (2015:186) this includes information for learners and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programmemes/services, information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programmemes for learners.

Each of these factors can lead to various results for learners, parents, teaching practices, and the school climate. In addition, each factor includes many different practices of partnership. Lastly, each factor poses challenges to involve all families and those challenges must be met. That is why Epstein (2001; 2009 in Keaton, 2017:21) considers it to be significant for each school to choose what factors are believed to be most likely to assist the school in reaching its goals for academic success, and to develop a climate of alliance between homes and the school. Even though the primary focus of these six factors is to promote academic achievements, they also contribute to various results for both parents and teachers (Đurišić* and Bunijevac, 2017:142; Keaton, 2017:21).

Makgopa (2012:20), differentiates between two types of parental involvement, namely school-based parent involvement and home-based parent involvement.

2.3.1 School-based parent involvement

School-based parent involvement implies volunteering to participate at the school itself. Some of the teachers indicated that parental involvement could be practiced in the library, on the playground, in the cafeteria, and while monitoring the halls or the restrooms. Some teachers indicated that they believed that school-based parent involvement can be channeled to create powerful and effective classroom aides and allies. According to Makgopa (2012:20), teachers argue that school-based parent involvement should facilitate and enhance learners' learning experiences. It should also help learners to succeed by adhering to the needs of the school and its teachers (Makgopa, 2012:20).

2.4 BARRIERS TO TEACHER- PARENT COLLABORATION

The benefits in collaboration between schools, parents and learners seem apparent, yet barriers that prevent collaboration still exist and present problems for teachers, parents and learners (O'Donoghue, 2014:18; Santana, 2014:16). In order to successfully facilitate a relationship that will lead to improve learner academic success, variables that affect the parents themselves need to be identified and explored (O'Donoghue, 2014:18). O'Donoghue (2014:18) identifies to types of obstacles that may impede the collaboration between schools, parents and learners namely: general obstacles faced by all parents and unique obstacles for specific parent populations.

2.4.1 General obstacles faced by all parents

Regardless of demographic information, certain commonly observed impediments could present themselves to any parent when trying to become involved in the school system (O'Donoghue, 2014:18).

2.4.1.1 Role of the parent

Significant research has pointed to the confusion surrounding parents' differing views of the role they should play in their child's education (O'Donoghue, 2014:18). This viewpoint directly affects the level and type of participation that parents are engaged in when it comes to education. Parents who naturally assume a role as "co-educator" are more likely to pursue interactions and relationships with their child's school, since they feel personally responsible for their academic achievements. On the other hand, "Parents who believe that their role is only to get children to school, which then takes over responsibility for their education, will not be willing to be actively involved in either school-based or homebased parental involvement" (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:39).

This view was reiterated in a study conducted by Chohan and Khan (2010:24), when they discovered that within the results of surveys distributed some parents share the pervasive belief that the school was solely responsible for the education of their children. This attitude leads to the conclusions that these parents would not feel obligated to take an active role with their children regarding education; not because of disinterest, but because of assumed parental role. This obstacle is highly impacted by various demographic aspects within each individual family (O'Donoghue, 2014:19). O'Donoghue (2014:19) stress the importance of identifying how individual parents' view their responsibility in their child's education and urge educators to develop strategies based on specific cases and incidents.

2.4.1.2 Perceptions of invitation

A second very important factor affecting parental involvement is perceived invitations of both the school and the learner to become involved (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:40). Too often teachers are passive in their efforts to involve parents, asking for volunteers instead of actively identifying parents that aren't usually involved (O'Donoghue, 2014:19). O'Donoghue (2014:19) point out that if parents do not feel like it is their responsibility to be actively involved in the child's schooling, they are not likely to actively seek out communication with the school, so the school must invite these parents in order to create a relationship.

If teachers aren't proactive in asking for participation, the parent can develop feelings of frustration and even distrust in the school and staff (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:49). Harris and Goodall (2008:285) go a step further by noting that this feeling of disconnect is only furthered by issues with common forms of school communication such as email and letters sent home; too many incidences have been noted where parents never received intended correspondence. The message within these studies is clear: schools need to make an active effort to find out how to best reach out to parents in their communities in order to convey the desire for collaboration and interaction (Harris and Goodall, 2008:285; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011:49; O'Donoghue, 2014:20).

Learner invitations were identified as the leading influence on parental motivation in the qualitative analysis of Deslandes and Bertrand (2005:170). More specifically, when these parents were personally asked for assistance or input on schoolwork, they tended to feel that their involvement was expected and desired. If learners aren't vocal in asking for assistance, research illustrates that parents will most likely assume that they aren't needed to perform in an academic capacity (Harris and Goodall, 2008:283). The evidence that has been shown throughout the research emphasises that parents feel the need to be desired and valued when involved in their child's academics. It should be noted here however, that the data presented did not address relationships between learners and parents where the help wasn't expected or assumed. According to O'Donoghue, (2014:20), generally parents need to feel that their child desires their involvement in their education at some level.

2.4.1.3 Parent efficacy

Perception seems to be the critical term when exploring potential barriers and motivations to parental involvement in learner academics, and self-efficacy is another aspect of this perception. Parent efficacy is defined by O'Donoghue (2014:22) as the belief the parent has about their general ability to influence their child's educational outcomes. This concept is a crucial force when parents are deciding whether they will involve themselves in their learner's work; it is dependent on whether they feel confident in their knowledge or ability to positively help (Harris and Goodall, 2008:280).

Hornby and Lafaele (2011:39) address the negative potential of this issue by pointing out that parents with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid contact with schools in general; this stemming from the belief that their involvement will not bring about any beneficial outcome for their child. There are many contributing factors to a parent's efficacy including previous educational experiences; the level of education the parent achieved themselves, and multiple social and economic factors (O'Donoghue, 2014:20). Regardless of the specific situations that present themselves, it is crucial to note that parental efficacy has been determined to be integral in making parental involvement a reality in public schools, so proper attention must be paid (O'Donoghue, 2014:22).

2.3.2 Home-based parental involvement

According to Lawson (2003 in Makgopa, 2012:20), home-based parental involvement revolves around home-based activities that help reinforce the school's mission and teachers' work practices through positive parental social modelling. Teachers, in this case, are reported to be viewing parental involvement as a means of facilitating their ability to teach. They view home-based parent involvement and subsequent positive social modelling as an important vehicle to make teachers' jobs easier. The teachers regard parents as the first-time teachers. The teachers just pick up the ball later after the first five years or so of the children's lives (Makgopa, 2012:20).

According to Titiz and Tokel (2015:186), a successful family involvement is realized if; families see themselves as real associates, families' involvement is started by the family who interacts with the involvement programme most and other families' involvement is generalized by providing their involvement via the family. Such a situation saves the school, the families and the learner's time, education programmes which are appropriate to the school's main purpose are given, the family involvement is assessed according to standard quality criteria, the primary focus is on the learner's learning and the communication among families for other school activities (Titiz and Tokel, 2015:186).

2.4.1.4 Reactions of a teacher or a learner

Researchers have identified a potential barrier to parental involvement as the reaction of the learners towards the relationship that could develop between the parent and the teachers. Fan and Williams (2010:54) fairly discuss both possible outcomes of the relationship, both positive and negative. The positive influence revolves around the benefit of having the parent serve as an additional resource for knowledge and education in connection with the school (Fan and Williams, 2010:54). Since the parent will have direct information from the teacher regarding everything associated with that class, the parent's self-efficacy increases and they are more actively involved in the success of the learner (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:41). On the other side, there is definite opportunity for this relationship to negatively affect both the learner and parent. Any issues or disruptions in communication have the ability to create misunderstandings and frustrations for both the parent and teacher; additionally, these misunderstandings can lead to wrongful criticisms or punishments to the learner by the parent (Fan and Williams, 2010:69). The learner would react appropriately to each side of the situation, but the research correctly stresses the initial reaction of the learner to discourage the relationship as a fail-safe (O'Donoghue, 2014:22).

A similar study of the perception of teachers' views about parents reiterates the inequality that exists in the relationship (O'Donoghue, 2014:22). O'Donoghue (2014:22) stresses the need for further study on the topic and calls for researchers to address how communication is occurring at the beginning of the relationship between the teacher and parent. These studies rightfully point out that if parents have negative first interactions with teachers, they will oftentimes not return for a second meeting.

2.4.2 Unique Obstacles for Specific Parent Populations

Although all parents face a myriad of hurdles in everyday life as it relates to becoming involved in their child's school, certain groups of parents have additional difficulties that are exclusive to their unique circumstances (O'Donoghue, 2014:22). These difficulties are essentially similar to general barriers, but the parents' individual situations allow for an in-depth view of why these obstacles exist. Parents within this classification come

from families who are culturally diverse, low-income, emotionally insecure, and nontraditional structurally. One of the worst things that teachers do in situations with these parents is to assume that they have the same resources and life experiences as the other ethnic group or race and middle class counterparts (Christianakis, 2011:159).

Among these, class, ethnicity and gender of parents seem to be the most important factors (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:42). Differences in class, ethnicity and gender may play a role in determining the degree to which parents are involved with schools (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:42). In general, minorities are less involved, less represented and less informed, and are less likely to have access to resources, as well as more likely to have problems associated with language, transport, communication and child care (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:42).

Parents' education and income levels are interdependent, as better educated parents have a greater potential for obtaining higher incomes. In general, educated parents are financially able to create a solid foundation for school by providing extra resources (Shells, 2015:19). This foundation is a strong building block for success. According to Shells (2015:19), family race and poverty status are among the main reasons for the differences in early academic achievement.

According to Newchurch (2017:40), some barriers found in various studies include but are not limited to: lack of time (Okeke, 2014:3); lack of childcare (Okeke, 2014); no friendly school-parent welcoming policy in place (Okeke, 2014:3); not knowing how to get involved (Okeke, 2014); intimidation by the operational structures of the school (Okeke, 2014); speaking a different language (Yoder & Lopez, 2013); lack of resources (Yoder & Lopez, 2013); age of parents (Yoder & Lopez, 2013); feel marginalized (Yoder & Lopez, 2013); and intimidation by education jargon (Okeke, 2014:3).

On the other hand, Titiz and Tokel (2015:186), listed the obstacles which hinder families' participating in school activities as:

1. Parents' past negative school experiences hinder their cooperation with schools and their participation in school activities. Their negative attitudes towards the

school are reinforced especially when they are invited to school for their children's negative issues.

2. The family's poor economic condition also leads them not to participate in school activities. The school's economic expectation from the family also distracts the family participate in the school activities.
3. The family's low education level also makes the family reluctant about what kind of a duty they will have. Compared to low-education-level families, it is seen that high-education-level families are more reluctant about participating in the school activities.
4. Teachers' negative attitudes towards families' participation also hinders families' involvement.

According to Titiz and Tokel (2015:186), it may not be always easy to reach active school-family cooperation. Obstacles about family involvement may result from various reasons, such as problems that teachers and other staff face, language, culture and socio-economic differences between families and school staff.

For successful school-family cooperation and activities, which directly affect the learner's successful learning at school and at home, a continuous mutual understanding, support and involvement is required. Section 2.6 discusses some of the strategies which can be employed by both schools and parents to foster a positive relationship.

2.4.3 Child factors

2.4.3.1 Age

The age of children can be a barrier to the involvement of parents since it is widely acknowledged that parental involvement decreases as children grow older and is at its lowest level for children of secondary school age (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:43). The tendency for parental involvement to be greater for parents of younger children may be partly because younger children are more positive about their parents going into school. Whereas, older children are less keen about school involvement, such as parents going on class trips, which is at least partly due to adolescents wanting to become

independent of their parents (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:43). However, adolescents are still considered to desire and benefit from their parents being involved in other ways, such as helping them with homework and making subject choices.

In spite findings of previous studies as cited by Hornby and Lafaele, (2011:43), suggesting that adolescents still benefit from their parents being involved, parents, and sometimes teachers, sometimes misinterpret the situation and assume that older children do not want parents to be involved in their education, which can act as a barrier to effective parental involvement (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:43).

2.4.3.2 Learning difficulties and disabilities

Children's performance at school can be a barrier or facilitating factor for parental involvement. When children are struggling with their school work, due to learning difficulties or disabilities, then parents are generally more inclined to be active in parental involvement activities (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:43). In fact, many authorities on special needs education consider that involving parents is an essential aspect of effective education for children with disabilities or learning difficulties (Ackermann, 2015:27). Because the involvement of parents is required for the process of implementing individual education programmes this facilitates parental involvement for many parents of children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

However, this is not always the case since there are many possible areas for disagreement between schools and parents of children with learning difficulties or disabilities, which can act as barriers to effective parental involvement. For example, when parents consider that their children can achieve more academically or when teachers want more support from parents in backing up at home what children are working on at school (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011:43).

2.5 EXPECTATIONS REQUIRED FOR PARENTS- TEACHER COLLABORATION

Traditionally, parental involvement in schooling consisted of support offered to their children's activities at home, such as supporting with home assignments, aiding children

with reading, encouraging school attendance and offering support to school events like being present at school meetings, parenting sessions, and taking part in fundraising projects (Miles, 2016:15). Hixson (2006 in Miles, 2016:15) observed that the contribution of parents as important stakeholders in decision making is often mentioned as a significant avenue to enhancing public schools. Parental involvement has had an impact on the collaboration between parents and the school, and on learners' mindset, attendance, and learning (Miles, 2016:15).

In recognizing the value of parents being actively engaged in their child's education, Miles (2016:15) identify accountability and responsibility as key elements towards developing schools that are self-directed and have learners performing at high levels of learning. Olender and Mastroleo (2010:23) stated that if it is recognized that family units have a vital responsibility as partners in academic success, then the educators must do whatever is necessary to bring parents into the educational schema. Educators must urge parents to be energetic participants in the schooling of their children to connect the home, school, and community in order to offer our children a concrete education (Miles, 2016:16). In communicating with parents, educators must communicate on a level in which parents do not feel intimidated and give the parents a fair or accurate report on the academic progress of their children or the quality of their schools (Miles, 2016:16).

According to Ackermann (2015:27), parents' decision to become involved is based on three general factors: (a) parents' beliefs that taking part in their children's learning is a part of their responsibility (parental role construction) and their evaluation of their capabilities in that regard (parenting self-efficacy), (b) parents' perception of invitations or demands from schools and teachers and from their children to be involved, and (c) demands on parents' time and energy that may conflict with involvement activities (for example, caring for other children, extended family responsibilities, demanding or inflexible work schedules) (Ackermann, 2015:27).

The parents' decision to be involved, will lead to the parents' choice of involvement. The choice of involvement is influenced by specific domains of parents' skills and knowledge; mix with the demands on time and energy from other family and employment demands, and specific invitations and demands for involvement from children and

school/teacher(s) (Shells, 2015:18). The choice of involvement, again, will lead to the mechanism parents use to influence the child's outcomes. This mechanism are modeling, for example discussing schoolwork, volunteering, helping with school outings, and reinforcement, for example reinforcing school success and success related behaviors (Shells, 2015:18)

Ackermann (2015:28) states that parents get involved to enhance children's educational outcomes, primarily through the mechanism of modeling, reinforcement, and instructions as tempered or mediated by parents' choice of developmentally suitable involvement strategies and the fit between parental involvement activities and the school's expectation for their involvement.

Makgopa (2012:20) states that teachers believe that children's valuation of education is directly linked to the expectations and values of their parents; home-based parental involvement is perceived as the primary means of stressing the importance of education. The teachers view parent involvement as very important, because it is from parents where the children get most of their values and belief systems. If the parents believe that school is important, then the child believes that school is important. This helps create a positive attitude toward the school's activities among children, and it will eventually lead to improved learner performance (Makgopa, 2012:20).

Auerbach (1989 in Makgopa, 2012:20) suggests that while positive home factors were sufficient to carry a child in the lower grades, both positive home and school factors were necessary for literacy development in the upper grades. Makgopa (2012:20), further indicated that when the researchers investigated the validity of the commonly held view that parents' hopes for their children affect their children's success at school, they found that although these aspirations per se did not influence achievement, parental willingness to advocate for their children did. She hinted that the researchers link this finding to the teachers' expectations, namely that parental involvement in an advocacy role is important because it shapes the teachers' perceptions, which in turn influences learner achievement.

Often, academic aspirations of schoolchildren are clearly linked to the beliefs of their parents. As a result, children aim to be like their parents and desire to be as

knowledgeable as they are (Shells, 2015:18). Research from theorists, such as Flowers and Flowers (2008:12) and Palmer, Davis, and Hilton (2009:34) support this belief. According to the findings of Flowers and Flowers (2008:12), parental expectations and involvement have an effect on reading accomplishments of high school learners. The performance may be high or low depending on the parents' level of expectation. Palmer, Davis, and Hilton (2009:34) found that family support and involvement promoted success among junior and senior male learners in a Historically Black College and University in the United States.

Chen and Gregory (2009:36) found that children achieved higher grade point average and were more academically engaged when parents had high expectations. According to Rutchick (2009:56), parental expectations also influenced the children's expectations of themselves. Rutchick (2009:56), noted that these parental educational expectations often had an influence on children's academic performance even five years later. Learner outcomes are directly affected through parental interactions, parental beliefs, and academic support (Shells, 2015:18). Moreover, the value parents place on education is reflected in the learners' valuing of their own education. According to Shells (2015:18), academic socialisation is a term used to refer to the actions of parents who promote learner academic success. Children usually value the opinions of their parents. If the importance of education is discussed early, children will know the expectations set for them in terms of excelling in school and finishing their education (Shells, 2015:18).

2.6 STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE TEACHER-PARENT COLLABORATION

According to Santana (2014:17), three objectives must be met when implementing parent involvement in schools: One, having schools include parents in the child's academic decision making, two, educate parents in order to make the necessary decisions for the child, and three, enable and empower parents to work actively on behalf of the child. Schools have used various approaches to gain greater parent involvement. These approaches have many features in common. Many programmes focus on parenting skills used at home, and many also focus on communication between school and home. There are other common factors including a discussion on

how to use volunteers and getting parents involved in the governance of the school (Wright, 2009:32). By understanding that a goal in schools should be to create positive partnerships and collaboration, one can begin with setting a tone of friendliness and openness the moment they welcome the learner and family into your classroom.

Successful parental involvement programmes begin with a needs assessment to determine language preferences, concerns of parents, and relevance which makes engagement much easier (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014:13). Including minority groups' and lower socioeconomic families' input on programme development and implementation will attract families to the programme (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014:13). Involvement opportunities should be ongoing, not just once a year. When possible, provide childcare, transportation, translation, food, flexible scheduling, and culturally relevant programmes to help foster increased parental involvement in schools and eliminate or reduce barriers (Candis, 2016:34). Some strategies that schools can employ are discussed here.

2.6.1 School Initiated Training

One method suggested to increase involvement among parents of lower education levels is to train them in areas that will not only benefit the child, but the parents as well. For some parents education today is very different from what they experienced when they were in school. This sometimes causes a fear of the unknown which causes some parents to avoid the classroom (Wright, 2009:32). Other parents may be intimidated because it reminds them of struggles they might have had in school (Wright, 2009:32). Negative association with schooling keeps the parents away from the schools and keeps them less involved in the education of their children (Candis, 2016:34). Many schools have found parent training combats these previously mentioned feelings of inadequacy or intimidation many parents feel when it comes to education.

When parents become more knowledgeable about their child's education, the child is the one who benefits. The parents who receive some form of direct training in teaching reading skills can be involved and help their children learn better even if the parents themselves have poor reading backgrounds (Candis, 2016:34).

More recent studies have shown increases in rates of progress in reading can be expected if parents are taught instructional methods with the ability to move past the usual ideas of practice and reinforcement (Candis, 2016:34). A study by Wright (2009:32), revealed direct reading instruction given to parents on how to help their children had a positive effect on the reading skills of the children. The training consisted of instruction in reading skills training and correction techniques. The encouraged group attended a seminar where they learned about basic reading skills and the best way to choose an appropriate book, and the control group received no training. All of the children of the three groups of mothers were tested. The children of the trained group of mothers made more significant gains in reading level than the children of the other groups of mothers (Wright, 2009:32)

According to Candis (2016:34), training helps parents learn how to be involved or help with academics. Building leadership skills can teach parents how to work more effectively with schools and become advocates for their children. How to organize community and school partnerships is an additional type of leadership training for parents (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014:12). During workshops, it is encouraged that presenters make more personal and cultural connections with parents to encourage their voice and enhance language development among other skills (Collier & Auerbach, 2011:24).

Offering suggestions to parents about home literacy practices to support literacy in English is another best practice (Collier & Auerbach, 2011:24). Schools need to be prepared to mentor parents about how to partner with teachers and explain to them how they can positively influence their child's education and success (Candis, 2016:34).

2.6.2 Teacher training and other initiatives

A renewed perspective also provides school leaders and teachers with the ability to be prepared to explain the importance of partnering with the school for their child to be successful. Panferov (2010:111) suggested providing specific examples of how they can be formally involved within the school to become engaged. For example, teachers need to clarify to parents what it means to volunteer in classes to assist with learners.

Teachers also need to provide specific details to parents on how to serve as translators at school events or how to share information about their culture with the school. Additional examples include showing parents how to be informally involved through finding resources available at the school or local libraries. Arranging parent workshops about the curriculum and assessments to help them assist with homework can also be very beneficial, even if they are not literate themselves (Candis, 2016:34).

A study by Lekli and Kaloti (2015:102) in Albania, found that teachers actively strive to incorporate techniques that would maximize their sharing of information, regarding learners' progress at school, with their parents. Based on observations in the 9th grade schools, Lekli and Kaloti (2015:102) found three strategies that seem to be commonly practiced in our schools in Albania:

- Organization of parent-teacher meetings (once in a month, or by the end of each term);
- Frequent teacher-parent phone calls (especially in the elementary school) and
- Parent-teacher notes.

Newchurch (2017:47), noted that the most successful approaches for empowering families involved the following strategies:

1. Offer information on positive practices to raise parent-child connection (i.e., unravelling puzzles or participating in board games, storytelling about family experiences, or going on family outings to community locations like museums or parks).
2. Find recruiting and retention services that are linked to exact ethnic needs (i.e., face to face visits; shared experiences of previously involved family members; or ongoing, reiterative recruiting procedures).
3. Empower staff to enforce the programme with families (confronting assumptions, reviewing research, providing time to process new information) (Newchurch, 2017:47).

2.6.3 Use of technology

A study by Lekli and Kaloti (2015:103) found that the use of phones is a great flexible way of contacting parents and establishing a successful two way voice communication

even from the classrooms when learners are not present. According to Lekli and Kaloti, (2015:103), surveys have shown that a great number of teachers in Albania apply the use of cell phones in contacting with their learners' parents, but when it comes to the use of computers (e-mails), as another technological development achieving parent-teacher collaboration, it has proved to be the least effective due to the lack of information technology knowledge regarding the use of computers from parents, especially those over 40 years old.

However, communicating clearly and frequently with parents applying whichever possible means of communication, can help create situations that will assist parents in working more closely with their child's teacher to strengthen their learning, including even a home environment in which learning can take place effectively (Charamba, 2016:52).

2.6.4 Provide diverse and ongoing involvement opportunities for families

Parents who feel welcomed and wanted at school are most likely to participate in their children's education. However, parents have different styles, skills, and schedules, so schools need to make a range of opportunities available to accommodate diverse parent interests and availability (Albright, Weissberg and Dusenbury, 2011:8). Communicating to parents that their involvement is always valued, at whatever level possible, encourages families to participate however, whenever, and wherever they feel comfortable. Teachers should attempt to engage parents and be courteous and inviting in all their interactions whether they occur in the classroom, hallway, or parking lot. Schools can also scheduling a range of events/activities, such as classroom activities involving parents, holiday celebrations, and learner performances that are likely to appeal to parents' interests. Schools also need to liaise with parents and schedule school event on days and times that suit parents to enhance parents' participation at school. Balancing school-wide events with more informal and social activities will also foster greater involvement (Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011:8).

2.6.5 Offer guidance on how to help children at home

Close parental supervision of a child's homework has the potential to be counter-productive, and giving parents formal training on how to help their children in specific subject areas does not seem to make a difference. However, reviews of family literacy programmes suggest there is value in teaching parents some specific strategies for helping their children with reading (Perkins and Knight, 2014:6). Interestingly, however, there is limited evidence to support this approach in numeracy. Perkins and Knight, (2014:6) go on to state that, while giving parents and children interactive mathematical activities, it did not have a measurable impact on the child's performance, teaching parents specific strategies to help with mathematics did not add value (Perkins and Knight, 2014:6).

2.6.6 Build links through interactive home based tasks

When parents and children collaborate on interactive tasks, children learn while they spend quality time with their parents. The process also builds a new kind of link between home and school, sending a message that the home is a place where learning happens but in a different way to school-based learning (Perkins and Knight, 2014:10).

2.6.7 Listen to parents and focus on their priorities

When parents do accept an invitation to meet teachers face to face (often at formal parent-teacher nights or to discuss a child's misbehaviour, the encounters can be fraught (Perkins and Knight, 2014:11). Indeed, Lekli and Kaloti (2015:102) found that the main characteristic of such meetings was 'mutual fear'. Even when this is not the case, parents and teachers may be working at cross-purposes. While both want to discuss the child's progress and any difficulties the child might be having, there can be subtle, but important, differences in the ways in which they approach the discussion. In such parent-teacher meetings, Perkins and Knight (2014:11), report that the teacher was most likely to control the meeting, and that parents generally left feeling dissatisfied

because the teacher usually focused on his or her goals, rather than on those of the parents.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Parent-teacher partnership is emphasised to be an effective means of fostering learners' success in a well-managed classroom environment. This chapter has outlined the importance of parent-teacher collaborations in enhancing learner outcomes particularly at the early stages of learning. The chapter has also discussed effective ways of promoting parent-teacher collaborations and incorporating the Epstein's framework which regarding parental involvement. Despite the universally recognized importance of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement in their children's education are still prevalent. Among the barriers discussed include general obstacles faced by all parents and unique obstacles for specific parent populations due to demographics. Strategies to that school managers and teachers should use to increase parental involvement have also been discussed. These include: school initiated training; use of technology; providing diverse and ongoing involvement opportunities for families; offering guidance on how to help children at home and building links through interactive home based tasks. Research has proved that when parents and teachers work together, everyone benefits: learners tend to earn higher grades, perform better on tests, attend school more regularly, have better behavior, and show more positive attitudes toward themselves and toward school. Finally it is to be emphasised that every communication exchange between parents and educators, regardless of its format (whether it is a note, phone call, meeting etc) should be viewed as a carefully planned approach which would definitely support learners' learning in a stimulating and encouraging classroom.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Gwija (2016:50) the process of research is a procedure that involves introducing a problem, narrowing the research problem into a purpose statement, research questions, and hypothesis; using a writing structure that fits the problem and the methodology. In addition to that, research is a process of steps to collect and analyse information to increase the understanding of a topic or issue (Creswell, 2012:3). Therefore, in this study the researcher focused on research methods that are imperative and pertinent in this case study to furnish the enlightenment on the research problem.

In this chapter the research approach, design, paradigm and methodology applied in this study is discussed. The methodology is the general approach a researcher uses that includes both data collection techniques and the theoretical assumptions they bring to the study (Phokane, 2012:35). The data collection, data analysis techniques and the strategies employed to ensure credibility of the study are also discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach in exploring the teacher-parent collaboration in the primary schools in the Foundation Phase. Qualitative research is a strategy that emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Phokane, 2012:36). It is based on the use of words whereby the researcher describes, attaches meanings, interprets or tells a story about a particular phenomenon. Mohajan (2017:4) describe qualitative research as an approach to social science research that emphasises collecting descriptive data in natural settings; uses inductive thinking; and emphasises understanding the subjects' points of view. Qualitative research is concerned with the interaction of people with other people and objects in their natural settings or contexts as well as answering the research questions inductively.

Qualitative research is characterized by the naturalistic setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the main research instrument; multiple sources of data; descriptive data; a concern with process rather than simply with outcomes; inductive data analysis interpretation of participants' meanings; emergent design; interpretive inquiry; and holistic account (Creswell, 2009: 175-176). This means that the analysis, interpretation and description of individual and group behaviour, attitudes, perceptions and convictions are incorporated in qualitative research (Phokane, 2012:36).

In qualitative research, different approaches are available for the collection and interpretation of data. Two major perspectives were identified from the literature as dominating educational research: positivism (or post positivism) and constructivism (or interpretivism) (Ellis, 2012:59). A discussion of these two approaches is provided with justification for selecting interpretivism as the research methodology.

Positivists view data as being objective, which is in existence and ready to be found. They believe that reality is perceived through the senses of the people whose behaviours can provide the same results, which can then be based on universal cause laws (Gwija, 2016:60). Interpretivists however, obtain the subjective meanings of people's experiences, which have been "negotiated socially and historically" (Haines, 2012:80.). In addition, interpretive research adopts the perspective of understanding the behaviours of people whose reality is in their own minds, and assign subjective meanings to their actions (Askarzai & Unhelkar, 2017:27).

As this present research sought to understand the behaviour of parents and teachers and their subjective lived experiences, interpretivism was selected as the theoretical perspective for this study. Interpretivism and constructivism are closely related as qualitative paradigms because both seek to make meaning from interpreting the world in which we live (Askarzai & Unhelkar, 2017: 27). However, as applied in a similar study by Ellis (2012:59), constructivism was adopted for the conceptual framework and an interpretive approach was found to be more suited to the collection and analysis of data.

The interpretivism paradigm treats people as though they are the origin of their thought and feelings. In other words, when researchers conduct their research they allow feelings and reason to govern actions (Maxwell, 2013:5). These truths derived from people's subjective experiences are real and to be taken seriously. In addition, Terre Blanche, Durreheim and Panter (2006:9) state that the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind behaviour are explained. In short, reality is constructed in the minds of individuals (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:9). This implies that there is always a different way of seeing things and a range of interpretations about reality in the academic world.

In this study, the above view was applied when the researcher visited the targeted schools to use multiple methods of information gathering, which were face-to-face interviewing, document analysis, and observation. Laws, Harper, Jones and Marcus (2013:22), support this viewpoint by stating that, "...the researcher might instead spend time in the camp, getting to know the people and observing the situation." In this way, the researcher might be conducting an ethnographic research or a case study research (Laws *et al.*, 2013:22).

This is the case in this study, since the researcher spent some few months visiting participating schools to collect data in their natural setting, and using face-to-face interviews. When revisiting the first objective of the study (to examine the relationship between the teachers and parents in the Foundation Phase education) in the present study, it is important to get the subjective meanings (participants' experiences) on the role of parents and how school teachers involve them in their children's education. The aim is to understand the experience of the school teachers on the parents' role from the participants' point of view; an interpretive paradigm was therefore chosen. The case study research was chosen as the epistemology on the study. This epistemology falls under interpretive paradigm and uses qualitative methodology (Gwija, 2016:60).

In this study the researcher explores the meaning that the participants attach to their experiences of parental involvement in the teaching and learning of learners in the Foundation Phase education in rural primary schools. In qualitative research meaning

is socially constructed by individuals in their interaction with the world, i.e. applying their experiences in their social context. In general, qualitative research attempts to bring about an understanding of the phenomena from the perspective of the participant in terms of how educators and parents understand and experience parental involvement in the teaching and learning and positive learner outcomes (Phokane, 2012:36).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the overall, detailed plan or framework for collecting or obtaining, analyzing and interpreting data (Creswell, 2007:27). Furthermore, research design is a flexible strategic plan to be followed by researchers when conducting their research. It serves as a guide on the procedures and processes to follow when selecting sites and data collection methods (Gwija, 2016:52). In addressing the research question, a Case Study was used in this research by collecting qualitative data with the objective of exploring the experiences of educators and parents in the role of parental involvement in the teaching and learning of learners in the Foundation phase.

A qualitative research design is based on different philosophical assumptions and uses a variety of strategies of inquiry, methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2009:173). Since the investigator needed to look at a small group of respondents over a length of time a case study method which falls under the qualitative approach was used (Omenyo, 2016:32). A Case Study has a qualitative research design wherein the researcher explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over a period of time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, audio visual material, documents and reports and then reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2009:54).

Gwija (2016:55) identifies a case study as research design that involves intensive study of particular individuals (in this case the schools, parents and families) and their behaviour. On the bases of Gwija (2016:57), the present study is referred to as a case study since an extensive investigation on one issue (role of parents in enhancing

learner success) or research problem was investigated in four primary schools. According to Gwija (2016:57), numerous approaches distinguish a case study design from other non-experimental research designs. Some of the approaches in case study design are to:

- Investigate a single case for a long time or within a short time but comprehensively.
- Study one important issue in more than one case for a long time or within a short time but comprehensively.

Based on the views above, studying one phenomenon (parent involvement in schooling) in four primary schools for a single study is a case study research. Furthermore, case studies therefore, can also be conducted from a group of individuals such as an agency or institution (Gwija 2016:57). Typically, a case study involves intensive observation of an individual's naturalistic behaviour or set of behaviours. To add more, case studies are often exploratory studies, wherein a researcher can learn about behaviour when little is known about it.

This research used qualitative case study enquiry to get answers to the research problem. A qualitative enquiry was chosen because data were first collected in face-to-face interviews and there were direct document-observations through interacting with purposefully selected information rich participants in their natural settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:315). Creswell and Garrett (2008:322) claim that qualitative research yields detailed information reported in voices of participants and contextualized in the settings in which they provide experiences and meanings of their experiences. Maxwell (2013:5), define a qualitative study as "to be a genuine qualitative research, a study must take into account the theories and perspectives of those ones studied, rather than relying on established theoretical views or the researcher's perspective. However, the researcher in this study is not of the opinion that research participants' perspectives are necessarily beyond criticism, nor are they true with all due respect.

In addition, Maxwell's (2013:5), opinion points to the attention of the qualitative researcher to regard the participants' perspectives more seriously. In other words, the

researcher's perspectives may not dominate the findings from collection, data analysis, and reporting. In order for a qualitative study to attain validity, the gathered qualitative data should be sufficient. "Case studies typically combine data collection methods such as archives, interviews, questionnaires, and observation, and the evidence may be qualitative (in words) or quantitative (in numbers), or both" (Gwija, 2016:54). In line with McMillan (2012:271), to attain data sufficiency the researcher gathered data in three ways namely, literature review/survey, observations/document analysis and face to face interviews.

Baxter and Jack (2008:554) argue that the use of several data sources in a case study allows the phenomenon to be revealed and understood and also ensures credibility. The researcher chose the case study approach because it allowed a direct contact between the researcher and the respondents during interviews and more so respondents were able to express their ideas, opinions and perceptions about the study. The researcher adopted the steps set out by Omenyo (2016:33) in this study. These steps assisted the researcher in carrying out the case study in order to increase reliability of the research. The steps were:

- Selection of case
- Preparing to collect data
- Collect data in the field
- Evaluate and analyse the data, and finally
- Prepare a report on the findings.

3.3.1 Selection of the case

The researcher investigated the role that parental involvement plays in Foundation phase learning outcomes in the Sibasa Circuit found in Limpopo Province. One of the reasons for selecting Sibasa Circuit was that nineteen of the twenty the primary schools in the circuit are public schools and they are all based in a rural setting. The choice of these schools allowed the researcher to investigate the relationship between the school and parents/families and the teaching and learning process, and its contribution to the overall output i.e. positive learning outcomes.

3.4 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The following section describes the study population and the procedures followed to select the sample in the study.

3.4.1 Population

Khoaeane (2012:61), defines population as a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that confirm to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research. Khoaeane (2012:61) further indicates that the specification of the population begins with the research problem and review of the literature, through which a population is described conceptually. It is also important to distinguish the target population from a list of elements from which a group of subjects is selected, which is termed the survey population. In Research Methodology population means characteristics of a specific group (Pandey and Pandey, 2015:41).

One type of population distinguished by educational researchers is called the target population (Pandey and Pandey, 2015:41). The study population was all primary with Foundation Phase in the Sibasa circuit. The targeted population was, all principals and teachers in the circuit, and all parents with children in the Foundation phase in the circuit.

The circuit that was chosen for this study is a large circuit in the Vhembe district. This circuit serves a population of approximately 11,341 learners and employs approximately 301 teachers. There are 20 primary schools in the circuit, 15 of which are primary schools attached with foundation, 2 with foundation only and 2 are senior primary schools.

3.4.2 Sampling

A sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis .It is a collection consisting of a part or sub-set of the objects or individuals of population which is selected for the express purpose of representing the population (Pandey and Pandey, 2015:43). By observing the characteristics of the sample, one can make certain inferences about characteristics of the population from which it is drawn.

Sampling,” It is the process of selecting a sample from the population. For this purpose, the population is divided into a number of parts called sampling units.” (Pandey and Pandey, 2015:43). Social science research is generally about inferring patterns of behaviors within specific populations. It is impossible to study entire populations because of feasibility and cost constraints, and hence, a representative sample is selected from the population of interest for observation and analysis (Bhattacharjee, 2012:65). Bhattacharjee (2012:65) stressed the importance of choosing a sample that is truly representative of the population so that the inferences derived from the sample can be generalized back to the population of interest.

There are two categories of sampling techniques which are called non-probability sampling technique and probability sampling technique (Shabalala, 2016:53). Probability sampling is a technique in which every unit in the population has a chance (non-zero probability) of being selected in the sample, and this chance can be accurately determined (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 67). Non-probability sampling is defined by Jackson (2008) in Shabalala (2016:53) as a sampling technique in which the individual members of the population do not have an equal chance of being selected to be a member of a sample. According to Jackson (2008) in Shabalala (2016:53), non-probability sampling can either be convenience sampling where the researcher acquires respondents wherever he or she can find them, or quota sampling where the sample is like the population, but is selected because it is convenient to select it.

In qualitative studies, purposeful sampling strategies (part of non-probability sampling) are often used. This is mainly due to the fact that qualitative research methods are typically used when focusing on a limited number of informants, whom we select strategically so that their in-depth information will give optimal insight into an issue about which little is known (Degu and Yigzaw, 2006:41). A 'purposive sample' (Pandey and Pandey, 2015:45) was used to select the principals, educators and parents who were deemed to have the knowledge and experience concerning the issue under study. The purposive selection was based on Pandey and Pandey (2015:45) who identify them as individuals that provide in-depth and proficient information about a particular

phenomenon. The sample of schools selected was chosen using both purpose and convenience sampling.

For this study, convenience sampling was used in order to maximize the number of respondents. The researcher is acquainted with several of the principals and teachers in the schools that were selected to participate. Convenience samples are defined as “choosing a sample based on availability, time, location, or ease of access” (Ary *et al.*, 2013:674). There are advantages and disadvantages to convenience sampling (Keaton, 2017:36). The advantages of convenience sampling are: the sampling is easy to carry out, the cost is inexpensive, and the researcher can gather useful data.

The selection criteria were based on each school’s potential to add to the understanding of the processes and procedures used to collect building-wide data. The selection of participating schools was uncomplicated, since the overall study intended to investigate the teacher-parent collaboration in the primary schools in the Foundation Phase, from a total of 17 primary schools which have foundation in the Sibasa circuit. The selection of participants for this study was based on a strategy referred to as, “purposeful selection”.

Purposive sampling was used to select the principals, experienced educators in the schools and parents. The principals were selected since they are the heads of the institution with extensive knowledge of the school and experienced educators were selected because they are experienced and are expected to have taught for at least five years in their respective schools in the Foundation phase and also know the background of the school well. A total of 4 primary schools (two well performing and two poor-performing) with Foundation phase were selected for the study. A total of 4 principals, 13 educators and 21 parents (10 in the SGB and 11 who are not part of the SGB) in primary schools with Foundation Phase in the Sibasa circuit (a total of 38 participants) were purposively selected and interviewed for the study.

3.5 METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA AND INSTRUMENTATION

In qualitative studies, investigators gather several kinds of data and commit substantial time in gathering information (Creswell, 2009:175). Guided by Creswell (2009:175), the

researcher collected data from the research participants using the following methods: literature survey, interviews, observation/analysis of documents. Omenyo (2016:35) points out the importance of triangulation in a case study methodology - the use of different data collection methods from multiple sources to strengthen the evidence base. The study used data from principals, teachers and parents as sources of information. The use of different sources helped to validate the data, as data from one source could be checked by data from another source. Details of how data was collected using the different methods are provided in the sub-sections below.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were used to allow the researcher to have a personal contact with the respondents. This process allowed the researcher to communicate on a one-on-one basis with the respondents to find what they knew (knowledge and information); what they liked or disliked (values and preferences), and what they thought (attitudes and beliefs), as described by Haines (2012:90). Since this was a qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were used to allow for flexibility such as rephrasing questions and removing any ambiguity or misunderstanding. A particular advantage of the interview is that the researcher is present and can clarify any ambiguities that may confuse the respondent (Jonker and Pennink, 2010:87).

The researcher designed three distinct interview guides consisting of a list of questions to be asked during the interviews; one for principals (Appendix C), one for teachers (Appendix D) and for the parents (Appendix E). All the questions were open-ended. A face-to-face interview technique was used with all the participants and the interviews were audio-taped by a research assistant who had been trained by the researcher. The use of interview as a data collection method allowed the researcher to obtain detailed information from participants. Participants had the chance to express their opinions and ideas without restrictions while the researcher also had the opportunity to ask for clarification. This approach according to Omenyo (2016:36) facilitates faster interviews.

The participants in the interviews were selected from four primary schools in Sibasa circuit. To interview the 38 participants, the researcher interviewed two participants (2)

each day for a period of 20 days (spread over three months due to the availability of the participants) and each interview took thirty minutes. The interviews were conducted in free classrooms (for teachers), offices (for principals) and either at the workplace or homes (for parents) and were scheduled based on the availability of the participants. All the interviews were conducted in the English language and in some cases in TshiVenda since these are the two official and most commonly used languages of instruction in the school. The researcher began the interviews in July 2019 and ended in September 2019.

3.5.2 Observations

Observations were also used as a means of gathering primary data. This involved collecting information about the nature of both the physical and the social world respectively as it unfolds directly using the senses rather than indirectly via the accounts of others (Brown & Medway, 2007:529).

In this study, non-participant observations were made to generate in-depth descriptions of information that was otherwise inaccessible. This reduced the distance between the observer and what was being observed and that could not be produced by an instrument such as the interview (Kimu, 2012:113). In addition, the context or background of the behaviour was noted in the observations of both the subjects and their environment. None of the observations were taped: the intention was to witness and record human behaviour including muted cues, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and other non-verbalized social interactions, which suggested the subtle meanings of language.

Observations were made on the nature of teacher/parent, principal/parent, and parent/parent interaction during a normal school day. In addition, having obtained permission from the principal, the researcher compiled a profile of each school in terms of the state of the physical facilities, such as the classrooms, toilets and the school grounds. In addition, the staff and learners were also observed. A checklist for the school observations is presented in Appendix E. Using these methods, the researcher was able to explore the school community's practices and opinions regarding parental

involvement practice in primary schools, which enabled her to gain baseline data for developing an effective parental involvement programme for rural public primary schools in the Sibasa circuit.

3.5.3 Analysis of documents

Reviewing documents is a way of collecting data as existing documents are perused for specific or general details. Reviewing documents helps the researcher to understand the operations of the institution being observing. “Case study researchers often study written communications that are found in field settings. Many of these researchers believe that the meaning of a text can vary depending on the reader, the time period, the context in which the text appears, and so forth” (Haines, 2012:94).

Official Departmental documents, school records, and minutes of meetings provided valuable information that could either confirm or refute what respondents said in the interviews and what the researcher observed during data collection. Haines (2012:94) advises that once you have secured access to the documents, you should request only those documents that will answer your evaluation question. Haines (2012:94) also suggested that a data collection form be created to summarise the data gleaned. The form could have the type of document reviewed, a way of referencing each document and the information that answers each applicable question. The form may be used to compile and analyze findings.

It was found that reviews/document analysis are relatively inexpensive and unobtrusive. They may also bring up issues not noted by other means. However, the process may be time consuming if you review and analyze many documents. Information may be outdated, incomplete or inaccurate at times (Jonker and Pennink, 2010:87).

3.6 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Validity, often called construct validity, refers to the extent to which a measure adequately represents the underlying construct that it is supposed to measure (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 56). Reliability is the degree to which the measure of a construct

is consistent or dependable (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 56). It indicates whether the same data would have been collected repeatedly in studying the same phenomenon (Babbie, 2010:150).

The verifiability of qualitative research is assessed in terms of its reliability and validity, qualitative research is more accurately assessed in terms of its trustworthiness (Kimu, 2012:116). In this study, Lincoln and Guba's model Truth-Value, Applicability, Consistency, and Neutrality was employed to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative data:

- Applicability

Applicability refers to the extent to which the findings apply to other context settings and groups (Kimu, 2012:116). In qualitative research, the purpose is not to generalise findings to a larger population but rather to describe a phenomenon or experience (Kimu, 2012:116).

- Consistency

Consistency, which is the alternative to reliability, refers to the extent to which the findings would be consistent if the study were to be repeated in similar contexts or with the same subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:207).

- Neutrality

Neutrality is the degree to which the findings are a function only of the participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives (Kimu, 2012:116). In other words, neutrality can be the way of nonconformity from bias in research procedures, results and whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry was to be replicated with the same participants or in a similar context.

Another quality assurance strategy employed in this study is confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the data and its interpretation are grounded in events rather than the researcher's personal constructions (O'Donoghue, 2007: 100). The researcher spent a great deal of time with the participants in order to get more information and a greater understanding of their experiences in terms of the involvement of parents in supporting their children in the Foundation phase of school.

This was done by probing participants with further questions to get more clarity on certain aspects and to ensure that the information used in this study is the interpretation of the participants - not that of the researcher.

Data was collected from different sources, including teachers, principals and parents who are in all involved in Foundation phase to ensure the applicability of triangulation. Triangulation is the collection of information from several sources about the same event or behaviour (Phokane, 2012:44). In this study the experiences of parental involvement in the Foundation phase programmes of both educators and parents were explored through interviews. The researcher is regarded as the primary data gathering instrument because of his ability to construct questions in order to bring about an understanding of the phenomenon by means of semi-structured interviews within the participants' own natural contexts.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Content analysis was used as the main method of data analysis. It involved identifying, coding and categorizing the primary patterns of data (Kimu, 2012:122). The data in this study consisted mainly of individual interview transcripts and observations checklist.

The analysis of data began while the research was in progress. This constituted the first level of analysis (that is, the interim analysis). At this stage, data analysis was carried out to determine the main themes that emerge from it. This enabled the researcher to verify with the participants if the analysis did indeed portray their views. Molohkoane (2004:80) point out that member checking is both formal and informal and it occurs continuously. Therefore, member checking was done: whenever necessary. A summary of an interview may, for instance, be played back to the person who provided it, for his/her reaction, or the output of one interview may be played to another respondent who may be asked for his/her comments. Accordingly, the insights gleaned from one group may be tested on another.

As applied by Omenyo (2016:38), the researcher processed the data manually instead of using a software programme to manipulate and code data. This study involving

the interviews with the principals, teachers and parents, was still manageable enough to be processed manually. Manual data processing was also suited to the researcher's desire to be able to view the research topic in a holistic manner.

At the second level of analysis, the researcher transcribed all the tape records of the interviews. These were transformed verbatim into typed text before the data were analyzed. The next step was to read and reflect on each transcript after which the significant concepts and themes were identified and jotted down.

Furthermore, the data segments in the form of specific quotations and researcher reflections were labelled, sorted and resorted. These were then grouped together into themes and subthemes in folders. Constant comparisons were used to determine if the data segments were in the most appropriate categories. Data segments were rearranged, categorized and amended when necessary. Categories that were most appropriate to the study were identified and the relationships between them found. Throughout this data analysis process, data, links between the data and parental involvement theory were sought. In order to stay, as close to the data as possible, each theme heading was descriptive (Kimu, 2012:122). Another important aspect was the interpretation and explanation of the themes (Kimu, 2012:122). Most of these processes occurred simultaneously.

The original transcripts and recorded interviews were reviewed continually throughout the analysis in an effort to ensure that an adequate and accurate picture of parental involvement and the experiences of the participants were revealed.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study the researcher ensured that the Ethics policy of the University of Venda was adhered to. In doing so the researcher ensured that all the participants were intellectually and mentally sound. The manner in which the research was conducted, and the manner in which the questions were designed ensured that the participants were not embarrassed. All the procedures used in this study were neither stressful nor upsetting to the participants. The researcher ensured that at all times the participants

were not deceived. All of the participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. The participants were also made aware that anonymity and confidentiality would be ensured. The researcher clearly indicated to all the participants how the research data would be stored and disposed of once the research was complete. The researcher conducted the study seeking permission from the appropriate authorities of the Limpopo Province Department of Basic Education (See appendix i). The following were observed:

3.8.1 Voluntary participation and harmlessness

All the participants were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary, that they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any unfavourable consequences, and that they were not to be harmed as a result of their participation or non-participation in the project (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 137).

3.8.2 Informed Consent

The informed consent form (See appendix i) clearly described their right to not participate and right to withdraw, before their responses in the study could be recorded (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 138). The researchers retained these informed consent forms (to be safely kept for at least three years) after the completion of the data collection process in order comply with the norms of scientific conduct (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 138).

3.8.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

To protect subjects' interests and future well-being, their identities were protected throughout the study. This was done using the dual principles of anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity implies that the researcher or readers of the final research report or paper cannot identify a given response with a specific respondent. Further, anonymity assures that subjects are insulated from law enforcement or other authorities who may have an interest in identifying and tracking such subjects in the future (Bhattacharjee, 2012: 138).

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The current study assesses teacher-parent collaboration in the primary schools in the Foundation Phase in the Sibasa Circuit found in Limpopo Province. In this chapter, the collected data is described, presented in understandable concepts and themes to make sense of the information gathered in the field on parental involvement in in the Foundation Phase of education.

The researcher considered all aspects of the process of gathering data, for instance, the state of the school, and the type of data offered by participants, the manner in which the data was offered and the emotions displayed in the interview process. In presenting findings, direct quotations from the data were used to express ideas, beliefs, perceptions and suggestions as expressed by participants and also to prove that findings were coming from evidential data (Kimu, 2012:124).

This chapter presents data gathered from school principals, educators and parents in four primary school, two of which are known to be well performing and two underperforming. The state of the schools is summarised in data collected from the checklists and the characteristics of the participants are summarised then followed by the major themes as they emerged from the interviews.

4.2 AMENITIES AND RESOURCES AT THE SCHOOLS

A checklist was used to profile the state of each of the schools based on the physical state and resources available to each school at the time of data collection. The resources and state of each of the schools that participated in the study are profiled in Table 4.1. Schools 'A' and 'B' are known to be well performing schools and schools 'C' and 'D' are known to be poor performing.

Table 4.1: Resources available to the four schools

School	School A	School B	School C	School D
Permanent Classrooms	22	10	8	7
No. of temporary Classrooms	6	none	none	3
open air	none	none	none	non
walls	good condition	good	unstable	Good condition
windows	good condition	in place	all in place	in 2 classrooms
roofing	good condition	good	good	Leaking in 3 classroom
floor	uneven	smooth	good	Has holes in 2 classrooms
space	crowded	ample	ample space	overcrowded
male teachers	flush toilet, pit not working	pit and flush	pit	Pit
female teachers	flush toilets, pit not working	pit and flush	pit	Pit
male learners	flush toilets, pit not working	pit and flush	pit	Pit
female learners	flush toilets, pit not working	pit and flush	pit	pit
school safety	boundary wall/fence	fence	Fence	fence
school water	sometimes	always	sometimes	sometimes
learners bring water	no	no	no	sometimes
Is the water safe	yes	yes	yes	yes
co-curriculum activities	yes	yes	yes	none
electricity supply	yes	yes	yes	yes
telephone	yes	yes	none	none
school radio	yes	yes	no	yes
school tv	yes	yes	yes	none
library	non	yes	none	none
workshops	non	yes	none	none
laboratory	non	none	none	none
hall	yes	yes	none	yes

Based on the observations made by the researcher, all the four schools are relatively well resourced, with no schools having ‘open-air’ classes. Of concern were:

- Overcrowded classes in school A and D;
- Poorly ,maintained walls in school C;
- Poorly maintained floors in school A and D;
- Use of pit toilets in school C and D; and
- Boundary fence in a poor condition, lack of school radios (school C), and lack of library, workshops, laboratory and a hall in schools C and D.

These findings are supported by organizations like Equal Education, (2017:25), who conducted a survey on provision of water and sanitation in 18 schools in Limpopo province and found lack of proper toilets, tap water and sanitation facilities in most of these schools. In another study, Mavundla (2016:49) assessed school infrastructure in schools in Seshego circuit, Limpopo Province and found shortage of classrooms and toilets among other infrastructure of importance lacking in the schools and attributed this to the shortage of financial and physical resources.

4.3 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

As indicated in section 3.5.2, semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted in four primary schools in Sibasa Circuit with principals, educators and parents. For the interviews, the study used a selection of educators and parents whose children were in the four selected primary schools.

The researcher focuses on the interviews that gave the most valuable information in this chapter. In order to maintain privacy and confidentiality, participants' names and their schools were coded as shown in tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 but with clear reference to the schools from which they were drawn.

During the interviews an audio-tape recorder was used to record each interview and thereafter the recordings were transcribed for analysis. The transcriptions were analyzed by determining emerging categories. Throughout this data analysis process, data, links between the data and parental involvement theory were sought (Kimu, 2012:122). The biographical data of all the informants were presented in tables while the information having an impact on the responses was captured. Principals' and

teachers' profiles were tabulated in table 4.2 and 4.3 respectively and those of the parents in table 4.4.

4.3.1 Principals

Findings of the semi-structured interviews in Table 4.2 show that three of the four principals are males and all the four principals are above fifty years of age. One principal (for School B) has twenty-seven years of experience at the school, twelve of which as a principal. The principal of school D had nine years of experience as a principal, seven of which were at the current school whereas the principal of School C had very little experience as a principal (three years) and very little experience at that current school (two years). Based on these findings it can be deduced that the principals had developed a sound acquaintance with the parents and the community around their schools.

Table 4.2: Biographical data of the principals

Principal	Sex	Age(yrs)	Experience as principal	Experience at current school	School pressing need
Principal A	male	60			School classes
Principal B	male	52	12	27	library
Principal C	female	52	3	2	water, ablution, staff room, admin block
Principal D	male	58	9	7	classrooms, water, admin block

KEY: Principal A refers to the school principal for the first school visited and Principal B refers to the principal for the second school visited and Principal C refers to the principal of the third school and Principal D refers to the last school.

Among the pressing needs of the four schools according to the school principals are:

- Lack of classrooms (school A);
- Library (school B);

- Water problems, lack staff ablutions, lack of staff room, lack of administration block (school C); and
- classroom shortages, water problems, lack of administration block (school D)

4.3.2 Educators

A total of thirteen educators were interviewed for this study, of these, seven were females and six were males (Table 4.3). This gave a pretty good balance in terms of the views in terms of gender. Of these educators, the oldest was sixty-one years of age and the youngest was twenty-four years of age and again there was a good generation mix in terms of age. When it comes to teaching experience, the most experienced educator had thirty-seven years of experience and the least experienced had only a year of experience in the field. The majority of the respondents had more than ten years of teaching experience meaning they had developed a sound acquaintance with the culture, policies of the schools, the parents and the community around their schools.

The least qualified educator had a teaching diploma, whereas the majority had Bachelor of Education Degrees, with a few having honors and master's degrees.

Table 4.3: Biographical data of the educators

Educator	Sex	Age	Teaching Experience	highest qualification	workshops/courses on PI
Educator A1	female	49years	1year	BED degree	no
Educator A2	female	55years	34years	Masters Degree	yes
Educator A3	female	52years	24years	Honors degree	yes
Educator A4	male	50years	26years	Masters Degree	yes
Educator A5	male	44years	12years	Diploma	no
Educator B1	male	49years	15years	BED Hons	yes
Educator B2	female	49years	15years	BED	yes
Educator C1	male	49years	24years	BA hons	No
Educator C2	female	44years	4years	BED	yes
Educator C3	female	53years	27years	BED	yes
Educator D1	male	61years	37years	BA	no
Educator D2	male	24years	5years	BED	yes
Educator D3	female	52years	26years	BED	no

4.3.3 Parents

Table 4.4 shows that a total of twenty-one parents were interviewed in this study. The majority of these (seventeen) were females and only four were males. Even though the participants were predominantly female in this category, the findings of the interviews can be a true reflector of the society, since approximately 40% of households are known to be female headed (Nwosu and Ndinda, 2018:6) and in the families where both parents are present, the mothers seem to be the active parents in children's education and day to day well-being. Of these twenty-one, only nine indicated that they were married and the rest are raising their children as single parents. From the interviewed parents, the majority has one or two children, but one parent indicated that he has six children.

The youngest parent has twenty-three years old and the oldest was fifty-three years old. This showed a wide age-range of the participating parents, hence balanced views across all age groups. The majority of the parents had at least matric/secondary school education, with some having tertiary education. The mothers were mostly sitting-home mothers and most of them were not the breadwinners in their families. The majority of the participants were in the low-income bracket based on their responses and most

working fathers were not willing to participate. A few of the parents were serving the School's Governing Bodies (SGBs). Most of the parents were literate and did not have much difficulty during the interview process.

Table 4.4: Biographical data of the parents

Parent	Age	Sex	Marital status	No. of children	Highest education	breadwinner
parent A1	46	male	married	3	tertiary	yes
parent A2	58	female	single	2	tertiary	no
parent A3	46	female	married	2	tertiary	no
parent A4	32	female	married	2	tertiary	yes
parent B1	38	female	married	3	tertiary	yes
parent B2	49	female	single	3	matric	no
parent B3	48	female	married	2	tertiary	yes
parent B4	26	male	single	1	matric	yes
parent C1	41	male	married	6	matric	no
parent C2	29	female	single	1	matric	yes
parent C3	29	female	single	1	tertiary	no
parent C4	23	female	single	1	tertiary	no
parent C5	30	female	single	2	matric	no
parent C6	46	female	married	2	tertiary	no
parent C7	51	female	single	2	tertiary	yes
parent C8	25	female	single	1	tertiary	no
parent D1	30	female	married	2	tertiary	no
parent D2	34	female	single	3	tertiary	yes
parent D3	47	female	single	4	matric	yes
parent D4	30	female	single	2	tertiary	no
parent D5	43	male	married	3	tertiary	yes

4.4 THEMES

In the process of analyzing the transcribed data from the interviews with the principals, educators and parents from the four schools, the following themes and sub themes emerged. The first theme is based on the experiences of principals in the teacher-parent collaboration in the teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase.

Theme 1: Experiences of principals and educators in teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase

This theme is based on how the four principals experience parental involvement in the teaching and learning in the foundation phase. The researcher reports on how the principals experience with the school policies on PI; how the principals experience communication between the school and parents in the foundation for learners in the foundation phase; how the principals perceive parenting and PI in children's education in their schools and some of the barriers and ways to improve PI in the foundation phase in their schools.

Sub-theme 1.1: Parental involvement school policy on parent involvement

During the interviews, all the four principals indicated that their schools had a written policy on parental involvement and all the schools had a School Governing Body (SGB) in place. According to the principals, SGBs were relatively new, with three of the four having been established in 2018 and only one for school B having been established in the year 2000. The schools policies on PI compelled parents to attend meetings. Principal C expressed the following:

“Each and every parent is compelled to attend parents meeting and must also attend grade meeting...”

The composition of the schools governing structures varied in some schools, in school C, the principal indicated that *“It is a body of parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners”*, whereas in school D, the principal indicated that *“It is composed of educators and parents only”*. According to the understanding of the principals, the main tasks of the school governing bodies/structures are:

- *“to oversee”* (Principal A)
- *“Policy formulation, administering school finance”* (Principal D)
- *“Main task is to support the teaching staff to ensure that learners get the best possible education. Recommend to the HoD the appointment of educators,*

support the principal, educators and the staff in the performance of their professional functions” (Principal C)

- *“To maintain and improve the school property and building and ground. To determine extra mural activities, school subjects” (Principal B)*

Based on the interviews with the principals, the SGBs meet quarterly in school A and monthly in the other schools, however the principals indicated that meetings could also be held outside of the prescribed times when the needs arise. One of the principals indicated that meetings are held:

“Once a quarter, but the chairperson may convene an extra-ordinary meeting of SGB when he/she deem necessary” (Principal C).

The principals also indicated that, besides the SGB, there were also other structures in which parents could voluntarily serve, for example, Principal D indicated that: *“Yes, as food handlers and safety and security for learners”.*

The principals also indicated that the South African legislation gives provision for PI in the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996).

Sub-theme 1.2: Communication between the school and parents, and parental involvement in children’s education

For effective PI, there ought to be effective and efficient communication between the school and the parents/caregivers. The principals indicated that the schools communicated with parents via letters, phone calls and short message services (sms). The principals also indicated that they always provide opportunities for parents to come to school and talk with the educators and these occur normally once per term or quarter. The following are some of the principal’s remarks:

“Yes, there are class/grade meetings with parents...” (Principal B).

When it comes to volunteering, the principals indicated that some parents do volunteer to be involved in schools activities and they normally assist with cleaning school yard and classrooms, doing administrative work and in safety and security. However, of concern was parental involvement in assisting children with homework and the manner

in which they were raising their children according to the principals. When asked if they think parents in their communities were bringing up their children in a correct manner, principals of schools A and B said “yes” whereas principals of schools C and D said ‘no’. Principals for schools C and D indicated that parents were not assisting their children with their homework. The following is what the two principals revealed when asked “To what extent are parents involved in their children’s schoolwork/homework?”:

- “*The involvement is poor because most of the parents are working in town...*” (Principal D)
- “*They are not involved at all...*” (Principal C)

This is regardless of the fact that the principals made it clear that the school policies clearly stated how parents should be involved in their children’s homework:

- “*Curriculum policy state how test, homework will be done*” (Principal B)
- “*The policy state that parents should assist their children in doing homework*” (Principal D)

Another area of concern as indicated by the principals was in the cases of learners who are not living with their parents. The principals indicated that the support learners get from other caregivers not child’s parents is normally less. With regard to that subject this is what the principals had to say:

- “*The role is poor and the performance of a learner decreases*” (Principal D)
- “*Mostly the guardian are not fully involved in the education of the child and they dodge parents meeting*” (Principal C).

Sub-theme 1.3: Barriers to PI and ways to improve it

All the four principals interviewed agreed that PI is very important in the foundation phase. They stated that learners perform better if they are getting support from home. However two of the principals indicated that, regardless of the clear benefits of PI at the foundation phase, their experience with PI in their respective schools has not been good. This is what they had to say in this regard:

- *“The involvement is poor. Some parents do not want to be called to school to discuss the behaviour of their children”* (Principal D).
- *“There is no bond between the educators and parents. Parents and educators do not work as a team”* (Principal C).

Among the barriers to PI from the principals’ perspective, are:

- Lack of time because of work, illiterate parents (principal D)
- Parents not helping learners with homework, not attending parents meetings and not paying for educational tours (Principal C)
- working far from school and having difficulties in coming to school (Principal D)

Most of the principals indicated that parents need to be trained on their roles in their children’s education. Among some of the areas the principals indicated that need improvement to promote PI are communication between schools and parents/caregivers; building strong relationship with the parents; making parents sign each and every homework given to learners and hosting meetings/functions and always invite parents in any school matters. Some of the ways the principals try to involve parents included:

- *“Educate and motivate them to be serious to the affairs of their children”* (Principal D)
- *“Inviting them in cultural activities and also voluntary work”* (Principal B)

When asked what roles they would like parents to play, the principals indicated that they would want parents participate in school activities, attend meetings, assist with homework and Help and promote good morals at home.

Theme 2: Experiences of educators in teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase

In this theme, the researcher focused on the educators’ perception on PI in learners’ education in the foundation and the role they play in ensuring PI. Some of the sub-themes which emerged from the captured data seemed to overlap, but they have been categorised into four.

Sub-theme 2.1: Parenting and family structures in the communities

With regards to parenting and family structures in the communities, the majority of the educators were of the view that PI is affected by the fact that most learners come from families where they are either living with extended family members, child-headed families and single-parent families. According to the educators, this has a huge bearing on how children are being raised and the support they get from parents/caregivers. This is what some of the educators had to say in that regard:

“Most parents are in urban areas leaving children behind” (Educator A4).

“It has a great impact on a child because it makes them to have a negative or positive attitude on the educator” (Educator A2).

“Most learners live with extended families in which parents are at work, and learners are left with grandparents” (Educator C1).

The majority of the educators were of the opinion that the relationship between the educators and parents was generally good, but they expressed concern over parents' lack of interest and involvement in their children's' education. This is what some of the educators had to say in that regard:

- *“Only a minimum percentage do support their children and not all of them do...”* (Educator A2)
- *“The relation is not so bad though not of high level educator”* (Educator A2)
- *“They seem to be trying their best to get involved in their children's lives”* (Educator B1)
- *“The relationship is good but they do not help their children in school work”* (Educator D2)
- *“Most of them don't care about their children's education”* (Educator D3)

Majority of the educators indicated that being a foundation phase educator in a public school has changed over the years and many of them were no longer highly motivated due to the nature of learners they are now having to deal with and the level of parental involvement. They indicated that most parents no longer have time to spend with their

children and in most cases the children are left in the care of grandparents and elder siblings after school. Some of the educators' sentiments are below:

- *"It used to be good but nowadays learners are difficult to work with and are very rude"* (Educator B1)
- *"It is very difficult because parents in public schools are not involved in education of children..."* (Educator C1)
- *"Yes, before 1994, an educator could apply corporal punishment to a learner, not today."* (Educator C1).
- *"It is full of challenges as most of the parents are not involved in their children's education."* (Educator C3).
- *"Yes, no longer enjoy teaching, I only feel like I must teach to earn my monthly salary"* (Educator C3)
- *"Yes, because the learners are no longer interested in learning"* (Educator D1).

Sub-theme 2.2: Parental involvement in education and perceptions on parental involvement

The educators viewed parental involvement as parents' role in guiding and supporting their children in school-related matters. They viewed it as an important aspect in children's' education as it helps them to value education and perform better. In explaining parental involvement, some of the educators had this to say:

- *"A parent's role is to commit in guiding and supporting the child"* (Educator A1).
- *"A parent must encourage, help his child with schoolwork or with anything a school wants"* (Educator B1)
- *"They must involve themselves. Assist learners with school work"* (Educator D3)

Most of the educators indicated that most parents were not forthcoming in taking part in their children's' education. They indicated that they contacted parents on regular basis, in most cases once per term or quarterly or if a need arises, for instance when a learner's performance has drooped, when a learner is ill or is misbehaving. Some educator's indicated that a few parents do express a high level of interest and call to check on their children's' performance or come to school on regular basis to follow-up

on their children, volunteer or participate in extra-curricular activities. Communication between educators and parents is mainly via telephone, sms and letters. When asked how often they contacted parents, this is what some of the educators had to say:

Every time when the need to do so arises depending on the child's behaviour educator A2

When asked about their opinion on the level of PI at foundation phase in their schools, this what some of the educators had to say:

- *"There are some who are 100% involved and some who are not educator"* (Educator A2).
- *"They are not involved at all because when you call them for a meeting they don't attend"* (Educator C3).
- *"They do not involve themselves in the education of their children"* (Educator C3).

The educators indicated that they would want parents to be involved more in children's homework, extra-curricular activities and attend meetings regularly. This is what some of the educators had to say in that regard:

- *"By supporting the children when they do their homework and assignments educator"* (Educator A2).
- *"A parent must encourage, help his child with schoolwork or with anything a school wants"* (Educator B1).
- *"They should monitor their children's work"* (Educator C1).
- *"Visit school to check how their children are participating at their school work"* (Educator C3).

Some of the initiatives the educators indicated they take to encourage parental involvement include; keeping on informing them about the progress of the child including their behaviour, talking with parents in school meetings, contacting parents regularly, ask parents to sign homework and classwork and inviting them and talk about the importance of their involvement in their children's education. Among activities noted by educators that parents are actively involved in, include:

- helping learners with homework, extra classes during weekends and after school (Educator B1);
- signing their children's homework (Educator C1);
- teach extra-mural activities such as *Tshigombela* and *Malende* (Educator C1); and
- visit school to check how their children are participating at their school work (Educator C3)

Sub-theme 2.3: Teacher training

With regard to teacher training, both the educators and principals indicated that their training emphasises the importance of PI in learner education. Eight of the thirteen teachers indicated that they had attended a workshop or some sort of training on PI. The following are some sentiments from the educators with regards to their training and PI:

- *“We were training how to work with different stakeholders”* (Educator C1)
- *“We were trained to support parents to listen to parents challenges, respect parents and help the parents where necessary”* (Educator D1).

Even though some of the educators indicated that their training covered aspect of PI, some of their responses indicated a lack thereof. The researchers opinion on this matter is their training lacks important aspect of PI or they need regular training thereof.

Sub-theme 2.4: Barriers to PI and strategies to improve it

The literature reviewed in chapter two stressed the importance of PI and this was also emphasised by the educators. This is what some of the educators had to say with regards to the importance of PI:

- *“Learner will work hard to impress their parents. The school will have discipline. Teachers will get enough from learners”* (Educator C1).
- *“Learner perform very well when they know their parents monitor their work”* (Educator C3).

Despite all the evidence of the benefits of PI in children's education at the foundation phase, barriers for effective PI in the study area were apparent. Similar to the views of the principals, the educators cited lack of effort by the parents, lack of time due to work and illiteracy among the key barriers to PI in the study area. This is what some of the educators had to say in that regard:

- *"Parents at work and hours off work not paid. Learners not giving letters to parents"* (Educator C1).
- *"By not coming to the meetings"* (Educator A1).
- *"Working far from home, lack of time, not understand the system and feeling intimidated"* (Educator A2).
- *"Many parents are unable to help their children because they are illiterate"* (Educator D1).
- *"They are illiterate. They cannot read or write. They are afraid to go to school. They are shy to confront educators"* (Educator D1).
- *"Negative attitude towards school"* (Educator D2).

Some of the educators blamed the lack of PI to the introduction of no-fee schools. They alluded that, since parents no longer have to budget or pay tuition fees nor buy books, they no longer value education. This is what some of the educators had to say about the attitude of parents since the introduction of no-fees schools:

- *"yes , they no longer want to donate a cent for any activity at school"* (Educator C1)
- *"I am not motivated by the system which means the fear of being a teacher that I have can push me to resign from this profession"* (Educator C3).

With regard to ways to improve PI in children in the foundation phase, the majority of the educators agreed that parents needed training on the importance and how they can be actively involved. Some of the ways the educators implement to promote PI include:

- Inviting them and talk about the importance of their involvement in their children's education (Educator C3).
- Encouraging them to work with educators, being cooperative and teach their kids at home too (Educator B1).

Theme 3: Experiences of parents in teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase

Regardless of their educational and socioeconomic status, parents remain the first teachers and the family is still the main and primary source of learning for children, particularly after school. In that regard, the need for effective parental involvement particularly at the foundation phase need no more further emphasis. The following sub-themes emerged from the interviews with the parents.

Sub-theme 3.1: Child care and modern day children

Most parents indicated that it is challenging to raise children in the modern day life because of the demands of going to work and monitoring children's school day to day activities. To most parents, being a parent means being there for their children and taking part in their daily school activities. This is what some of the parents had to say about their experiences of being parents to children in the foundation phase:

- *“Being a parent means being involved in the day by day issues of your Children School work”* (Parent B1).
- *“To facilitate education, building learner in order to have a better future”* (Parent B3).
- *“It's not easy, it is difficult, because I have to check my child school work every day”* (Parent C7).

To most parents, the formal influence or training they received which has been helping them to raise their kids is from the church. Some indicated that they received some formal training from school and other community settings/groupings. In that regard, this is what some of the parents had to say:

- *“the church played an important role by having parents gatherings which discuss about upbringing of children”* (Parent A1)
- *“The church influenced me a lot by teaching me that kids must know the creator when they are still young”* (Parent B4)
- *“Church they help me to teach my children how to live in a good way”* (Parent C5).

The parents interviewed indicated that today's children lack discipline, have too many rights and are too much attached to technology. The parents indicated that most children of this age spend much of their time playing games on phones, computers and other gadgets, watching TV and some indicated that children that age spend much of their time after school playing football and other games. When it comes to disciplining children at home, most parents indicated that it is the responsibility of both parents but in cases where they are away or at work other caregivers such as grandparents also discipline children. This is what some of the parents had to say in that regard:

- “The person caring for the kids but with parents overseeing and giving instruction of how it should be done” (Parent A1).
- “Someone may help but parents must give themselves time for their children” (Parent A3).
- “My sister and my mother. By taking their phones away for a certain time” (Parent B2)
- “Sometimes they spend time with their grandmother she whips them to get them in line” (Parent C5)
- “My grandmother-by correcting them if they are doing something wrong in order to do things right” (Parent C4).
- The grandparents, they buy favours like giving them sweets (Parent D5).

Parents were asked “In what ways are children disciplined?” From the findings, what was important to note is the fact that most parent are doing away with corporal punishment, even though the parents indicated that when left in the care of grandparents, children are still disciplined the ‘old school’ using corporal punishment. Among some of the ways used by parents to discipline children include:

- “*They are grounded and some of their privileges taken away*” (Parent A1).
- “*By telling them things to be done and things not to be done*” (Parent A2).
- “*By sitting down and talk with them*” (Parent A3).
- “*We refrain them from certain things like pocket money and taking the phone for sometime...*” (Parent B1).

- *“I sit them down and explain what is wrong and what is right. They must always respect others”* (Parent B2).
- *“By taking away something from them which they need most, for example, phones and other games”* (Parent B4)
- *“Don’t allow to play games for a week”* (Parent C7).
- *“Talk to them and grounding them”* (Parent D5).

Sub-theme 3.2: Homework, education and parents

Completing homework is known to develop positive attitudes towards schoolwork, build confidence and abilities of learners and improve in a variety of skills. It is thus important that parents ensure that their children accomplish their homework at this phase of learning and by completing the homework with learners this creates a bond between parents and children and ensures communication between the school and parents. The parents indicate that they either complete homework with their children, have a schedule which children follow after school or allow their children to go for afternoon classes where they are helped to complete their homework. Below are some of the responses from the parents on how homework is controlled:

- *“There is time allocated for homework and done under supervision of either parent”* (Parent A1).
- *“Every afternoon we do homework together”* (Parent B1).
- *“Every day when coming from school they eat first, relax a bit then we start doing homework”* (Parent B2).
- *“I take the homework and mark them and give them feedback where they didn’t get the answer correctly”* (Parent B4).
- *“By the afternoon class teachers”* (Parent C4).
- *“By checking their books everyday”* (parent C7).
- *“Homework is controlled at after school”* (Parent D4).

When it comes to involvement in their children’s education at this crucial stage, most parents agreed that they would want to be involved in various ways, including helping with homework, teaching them and other various school related activities. This is what

some of the parents had to say when asked if they think they should be involved in the education of children at the foundation phase:

- *“Yes, children future is shaped at this critical stage so the earlier you get involved the better. It is very critical to get involved cause the children future is built at the foundation phase”* (Parent A1).
 - *“They should help them with their homework and even teaching them...”* (Parent A2).
 - *“They should keep in touch with the teacher with regards to daily activities”* (Parent B1).
 - *“Homework activities and after school learning programmemes at home”* (Parent B2).
 - *“Everyday learners or children must read for their parents before sleeping”* (Parent B3).
 - *“By teaching the homework”* (Parent C4).
 - *“To check their children work every day”* (Parent C7).
 - *“Helping them in writing homework”* (Parent D4).
- Would you like to be involved? Explain

Parents are allowed to raise their views to improve their childrens education A3

- How do you find out what is happening at school?
I go to school on a regular basis to check on their school work B1

Sub-theme 3.3: Parents at school and at meetings

Among the most important aspect when it comes to PI at any stage is the communication between the school and the parents. The parents indicated that they normally communicate with the school telephonically or via sms or school letters. A few parents indicated that they normally sign on their children’s homework and class activities and some said that they visit the schools on regular basis with or without invitation to find out how their children are performing. However, most parents said they visit the schools on a monthly or quarterly basis when there are scheduled school, SGB

or class/grade meetings. When it comes to their participation in school activities and volunteering, a few indicated that they normally volunteer to assist with cleaning the school yard or classrooms and some indicated that they assist with extracurricular activities such as traditional dances and cultural events. When asked how they are treated when they visit the schools and how they participate in school meetings or gatherings, here is what some of the parents had to say:

- “We are treated with absolute courtesy when we visit the schools” (Parent B1).
- “Yes, parents are usually the main focus they decide how and when things must be done” (Parent C5).
- “Yes, I like cleaning and offering security services” (Parent A1).
- “Yes, if they are included in the programme, even other parents participate because the meeting is for them” (Parent A2).
- “Yes, parents are involved in meetings and they are addressed by the educators” (Parent B1).

Sub-theme 3.4: Barriers to parental involvement

Similarly to the sentiments of the educators and principals, most parents now know/understand the benefits of their involvement in their children’s education. Most of them indicated that they would want to be actively involved but they either do not know how, do not have the time or work far from the schools or homes. These are some of the reasons the parents stated why they could not be actively involved:

- *“Sometimes work-related issues but most of the time I am involved”* (Parent A1).
- *“During the day I am at work and most parents who stay at home are illiterate”* (Parent A3)
- *“Distance- some parents work far away from home so they hire someone to look after their children”* (Parent B2).
- *“Failure to attend meetings”* (Parent B3).
- *“School must inform parents in time for meetings so that they prepare themselves”* (Parent B3).
- *“Working far away from the school of my children”* (Parent C2).

- *“Parents work and jobs” (Parent A1).*
- *“Sometimes parents do not attend parents meetings or so...” (Parent B1).*
- *“Most of them are illiterate” (Parent B4).*
- *“Communication teachers fail to communicate with parents on letting them how well or poor the kids is doing” (Parent C5).*

When asked about resources which the schools need so that they as parents could be more involved, most parents came up with very good and valuable suggestions like schools forming ‘WhatsApp groups’ for easy and quicker communication since many parents now have smartphones, to having some scribbling pocket books where the parents write some notes to parents and vice versa, since most letters never make it home and having a school hall where parents meetings and other gatherings can be held. Here is what some of the parents suggested:

- *“Library- learners can go and do their homework and read there...” (Parent A1).*
- *“School hall to use to accommodate parents during meetings” (Parent A3).*
- *“They need to contact parents telephonically because some letters never reach home” (Parent B1).*
- *“I would like to have a scribbler book were we communicate with the educator daily” (Parent B1).*
- *“School hall to accommodate for parents during meetings” (Parent B2).*
- *“Have a suggestion box” (Parent B3).*
- *“If we can manage to have the two grounds they can play soccer and netball” B4*
- *“Ground for sports and hall” (Parent C2).*
- *“The school needs a hall of meetings to gather all the parents” (Parent C4).*
- *“If the school can have something commonly used as a WhatsApp group, it would be much easier” (Parent C5).*
- *“We need chairs and school hall were activities will be done” (Parent D4).*

In addition to these suggestions, most parents also shared their ambitions to be part of the SGB committees and serve in different roles. Some even suggested that the school create more avenues for parents to be more involved.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

As presented in section 4.4 above, the findings from the raw data are organised and presented in themes and sub-themes which served as main heading and sub-headings as will be evident in the discussions that follows below. During the discussion, findings from the raw data are used to illustrate some of the important findings, their implications and how these compare to previous findings.

4.5.1 Resources available within the schools

As was evident in the observation study and in the interviews with principals, the schools are poorly resourced and there is need for urgent attention. Findings indicated that all the four schools have adequate classrooms and there is no more open-air air learning, but in some cases, the classes are still overloaded, the state of the building is very poor and in some cases the schools lack proper sanitation services such running tap water and flushing toilets. Most (if not all the schools) also lacked libraries, administration blocks, school halls, proper staff-rooms and workshops.

Such findings are supported by organizations like Equal Education, (2017:25), who conducted a survey on provision of water and sanitation in 18 schools in Limpopo province and found lack of proper toilets, tap water and sanitation facilities in most of these schools. In another study, Mavundla (2016:49) assessed school infrastructure in schools in Seshego circuit, Limpopo Province and found shortage of classrooms and toilets among other infrastructure of importance lacking in the schools and attributed this to the shortage of financial and physical resources.

4.5.2 Parental involvement school policy on parent involvement

Findings from this study showed that all the schools have some form of a written policy when it comes to PI even though some of the principals struggled to explain/interpret it to the researcher. All the four schools have functional school governing bodies (SGBs) even though in some schools, the formation of the SGB was quite a recent thing. Based on the principals' responses, the principals of the two better performing schools had a

positive perception about their communities and parents compared to the principals of the two underperforming schools.

The findings of the study in this aspect are in line with South Africa's legal requirements on PI. The South African legislation extends the right to parents and the community to participate in the school's governing structures. This creates a framework for formal parent involvement (Lemmer, 2007:218). Selolo (2018: 19) also further states that "Chapter 2 of the Constitution (RSA,1996) expects parents to ensure that children's rights are protected, among others, ensuring the regular school attendance, payment of fees where applicable, ensure conducive and effective teaching and learning environment, build partnerships among the relevant stakeholders in education and involving themselves in the education of their children in totality." The South African Constitution also give an allowance for parents to determine school policies, control and maintain physical resources, support curriculum, make meaningful contribution towards the smooth running of the school, to name but a few. In addition to that South African education system is governed and legislated through the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996.

4.5.3 Communication between the school and parents

When it comes to communication between the schools and parents and vice versa, there seems to be quite a mix of communication channels, something which is commendable in this modern day era. The major concern here was still the reliance of letters in some schools/instances, and as expressed by parents 'these sometimes never make it home'. The schools indicated that they use telephones, short message services and letters to communicate with parents. However most educators, parents and the principals indicated that much of the face to face communication happens once per quarter and in some cases, even that once per quarter, parents still do not show up.

Contrary to what Selolo (2018:60) concluded when it comes to communication between the schools and parents, most parents in this study prefer modern day technological means of communication compared to letters. According to Reynolds, Crea, Medina,

Degnan and McRoy, (2015:764), modern day technological communication such as sms, emails and other instant messaging platforms seem to frustrate parents as they are illiterate, but findings of the current study showed that parents prefer modern day technological communication, meaning that they can read and understand it.

4.5.4 Parenting and family structures in the communities

Based on the findings of the study from the interviews with the educators, most families in the communities are either broken or single parent headed. The educators indicated that in most cases the children are living with grandparents, extended family members, and elder siblings and in some cases caregivers. In cases where the children are living with their parents, in most cases it is a single parent (the mother only) and in cases where both parents are living together, it is the mother who is actively involved in the children's day to day school activities.

When it comes to after-school, most children are left in the hands of caregivers, elder siblings and grandparents, who in most cases cannot assist children with homework or other extra-curricular activities. This has serious implications on the children, since most children who lack support from parents/home lag behind in class and are associated with a whole lot of other negative outcomes.

In line with the findings of the current study, Poole (2017:62) when recruiting parent participants for her study she found that mothers were reported as being the person actively involved in day-to-day participation in their child's schoolwork. According to Poole (2017:62) mothers were also found to be the primary source of support and encouragement regarding their child's learning difficulty. Mothers were found to be more involved than fathers in each of three aspects of parental involvement in children's schooling: behaviour, cognitive/intellectual, and on a personal level.

4.5.5 Teacher training and PI

Even though the principals and educators indicated that they had received some form of training on PI in their teacher training or had attended a workshop where the aspect was covered, their lack of knowledge and sharpness in the phenomenon was apparent in the interviews. Most educators were failing to define PI or ways in which they can improve

or implement it. This was common regardless of the school, even though two of the schools are known to be performing better than the other two. A study by Lekli and Kaloti (2015:102) in Albania, found that educators actively strive to incorporate techniques that would maximize their sharing of information, regarding learners' progress at school, with their parents. Based on that, it is clear that the educators need regular training on PI on to learn new techniques and ideas to maximize PI.

4.5.6 Homework, education and parents

The interviews with parents showed that the parents know the importance of taking part in their children's education and most importantly the importance of assisting their children with homework at this crucial stage of learning. However, educator's interviews showed that this appreciation does not always translate into action as most parent were not actively participating in their children's schoolwork and most importantly not assisting them with homework. Among the factors cited by educators and parents themselves include: illiteracy among parents, parents working far from home/schools, broken family structures and in some instances lack of interest.

According to Kimu (2012:159), a parenting style that includes frequent and systematic discussions with children about schoolwork and supervision, monitoring children when they return home from school and their after school activities, overseeing time spent on homework and the extent to which children watch television, was critical to the learner's achievement. Kimu (2012:159) found that parental expectations and the extent to which parents communicate their academic aspirations to their children, were found to be the most critical for learners' enhanced achievement. Based on the study findings, it is clear that lack of parental involvement in homework and other school-related activities could be having negative consequences on the learners' current and future learning outcomes.

4.5.7 Parents at school and at meetings

One of the areas in which most of the schools were doing well was the effort to try and accommodate parents whenever they visit schools. The majority of the parents

indicated that they do receive invitations from the schools, even though a few parents complained about the invitations arriving late or in some cases not arriving at all. Invitation are normally in the form of letters, phone calls and sms. Whenever they visit the schools, the parents indicated that they are treated with courtesy and respect.

The parents indicated that they are well accommodated in the meetings and they are given a chance to air their opinions. Most of the parents who volunteer at the schools volunteer to clean and offer security services. This could be due to their illiteracy, but the schools need to be encouraged to make use of the educated parents to come and volunteer to give career-related speeches, motivate learners, educators and fellow-parents and offer some specialist services to the schools like library services and health related talks among other things.

A previous study by Selolo (2016:60) showed that two parents can communicate or approach an educator, but the outcome of the contact may differ a result of the parents' intension and attitude towards the educator. Another study by Okeke (2014:3) also showed that parents sometimes complain about the unwelcoming behaviour of the educators. Based on the findings of this study it can be deduced that the parents do not have negative attitudes towards the schools and educators and vice versa.

4.5.8 Barriers to parental involvement

Barriers to PI in the four schools based on the principals, educators and parent's interviews include: illiteracy among parents, parents working far from schools/home, lack of effort and time from the parents, lack of opportunities to be involved, communication breakdown between schools and parents and the lack of training on PI on both the educators and parents' side.

Findings of the current study were in line with findings of other similar studies, for example, Okeke (2014:3) who also found that challenges and constraints affecting parental involvement in children's education varies from poverty and unemployment, working parents, illiteracy, lack of knowledge, child headed families and family structure.

4.5.9 Overcoming the barriers

A number of suggestions came up particularly from the parents' side to try and overcome some of the identified barriers. Among the important suggestions made, the schools need to do away with the use of letters as in most cases these never make it home. Schools need to inform parents about meetings and issues in time and not wait for quarterly or parents meetings. One of the most important suggestions made was for the schools to have WhatsApp groups as this is much more faster and efficient way of communicating since most parents and educators now have smart phones.

When it comes to disciplining of children, parents need to take action whenever educators alert them of something. Implications of parents not disciplining their children at home are demoralized teachers and teachers' unwillingness to communicate with parents.

The schools and the educators are not coming up with innovative ways to try and involve parents and in that regard principals are advised to identify training needs/gaps for both educators and parents so that they can come up with better ways to have effective and efficient partnerships for better outcomes of the children.

As suggested by Okeke (2014:6), there are numerous ways and opportunities of parents to be involved in their children's school activities and these include extracurricular activities such as sports. Such extracurricular activities such as sports, games and clubs are known to be uniting as they offer home-school kindred and the participation of parents is likely to be enhanced and learners will gain from such involvement (Okeke, 2014:6). Based on the study findings, the schools need to open avenues and opportunities that promote involvement in extracurricular activities and open doors for parents to be involved in these activities together with their children. To achieve that schools will need more resources to have school halls and sports fields among other important resources.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of data collected through observations (checklist) and one on one interviews with principals, parents and educators' using semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed and presented thematically with findings supported with respondent's direct quotations. The chapter also cover the discussion of the key findings and the findings were linked to the study's objectives and literature survey to validate and support the findings. The following chapter will present the chapter overview, major conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations derived from both the literature and empirical investigation with the principals, educators, parents and the observation study. The objectives of the study looked at: the relationship between the teachers and parents in the Foundation Phase education; the barriers to teachers-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase; the expectations required of teachers-parent collaboration and strategies that can be used to promote teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase. The current chapter presents the chapters' overview, major conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future studies.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 gave the background to the study, stated the problem and motivated reasons to study further. The chapter also outlined the significance of the study, aim and objectives, posed research questions as they were derived from the objectives and defined key concepts. Research methodology covering design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis as well as ethical considerations were also outlined.

Chapter 2 covered literature in line with parental involvement in the education of their children in the foundation phase of learning. The literature outlined the importance of parent-teacher collaborations in enhancing learner outcomes particularly at the early stages of learning. The chapter has also discussed effective ways of promoting parent-teacher collaborations and incorporating the Epstein's framework which regarding parental involvement. Despite the universally recognized importance of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement in their children's education are still prevalent. Among the barriers discussed include general obstacles faced by all parents and unique obstacles for specific parent populations due to demographics. Strategies to that school managers and teachers should use to increase parental involvement have also been discussed. These include: school initiated training; use of technology;

providing diverse and ongoing involvement opportunities for families; offering guidance on how to help children at home and building links through interactive home based tasks. Research has proved that when parents and teachers work together, everyone benefits: learners tend to earn higher grades, perform better on tests, attend school more regularly, have better behaviour, and show more positive attitudes toward themselves and toward school. Finally it is to be emphasised that every communication exchange between parents and educators, regardless of its format (whether it is a note, phone call, meeting etc) should be viewed as a carefully planned approach which would definitely support learners' learning in a stimulating and encouraging classroom.

Chapter 3 outlined the research approach, design, paradigm and methodology applied in the study. The data collection, data analysis techniques and the strategies employed to ensure credibility as well as ethical considerations of the participants of the study are also discussed. The chapter also described the study area, the population where data was to be collected from and the sampling method used to select participants.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of data collected through observations (checklist) and one on one interviews with principals, parents and educators' using semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed and presented thematically with findings supported with respondent's direct quotations. The chapter also cover the discussion of the key findings and the findings were linked to the study's objectives and literature survey to validate and support the findings. The data was presented under five main themes namely: amenities and resources at the schools, profile of the participants, experiences of principals and educators in teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase, : experiences of educators in teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase and experiences of parents in teacher-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase.

Chapter 5 covers a summary of the other four chapters, summarises the main findings based on the collected data. The chapter also covers the recommendations of the study as well as the concluding remarks that describes the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research thereof.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The following is a summary of the main/key findings of the empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews and observation (using a checklist). The main findings relate to specific objectives 1 and 2 whereas objective 3 is linked to the literature study and objective 4 is related to the recommendations of the study.

Objective 1: Examine the relationship between the teachers and parents in the Foundation Phase education.

Below is a summary of the key findings linked the relationship between the teachers and parents in the Foundation Phase education:

Parental involvement school policy on parent involvement

- Findings from this study showed that all the schools have some form of a written policy when it comes to PI even though some of the principals struggled to explain/interpret it to the researcher.
- All the four schools have functional school governing bodies (SGBs) even though in some schools, the formation of the SGB was quite a recent thing. Based on the principals' responses, the principals of the two better performing schools had a positive perception about their communities and parents compared to the principals of the two underperforming schools.

b) Communication between the school and parents

- Communication between the schools and parents and vice versa: there seems to be quite a mix of communication channels, something which is commendable in this modern day era.
- The major concern here was still the reliance on letters in some schools/instances, and as expressed by parents 'these sometimes never make it home'.
- The schools indicated that they use telephones, short message services and letters to communicate with parents.

- Most educators, parents and the principals indicated that much of the face to face communication happens once per quarter and in some cases, even that once per quarter, parents still do not show up.

c) Parenting and family structures in the communities

- Based on the findings of the study from the interviews with the educators, most families in the communities are either broken or single parent headed.
- The educators indicated that in most cases the children are living with grandparents, extended family members, and elder siblings and in some cases caregivers. I
- In cases where the children are living with their parents, in most cases it is a single parent (the mother only) and in cases where both parents are living together, it is the mother who is actively involved in the children's day to day school activities.
- When it comes to after-school, most children are left in the hands of caregivers, elder siblings and grandparents, who in most cases cannot assist children with homework or other extra-curricular activities.

d) Teacher training and PI

- Even though the principals and educators indicated that they had received some form of training on PI in their teacher training or had attended a workshop where the aspect was covered, their lack of knowledge and sharpness in the phenomenon was apparent in the interviews.
- Most educators failed to define PI or ways in which they can improve or implement it. This was common regardless of the school, even though two of the schools are known to be performing better than the other two.

e) Homework, education and parents

- The interviews with parents showed that the parents know the importance of taking part in their children's education and most importantly the importance of assisting their children with homework at this crucial stage of learning.
- Educator's interviews showed that parents were not actively participating in their children's schoolwork and most importantly not assisting them with homework.

f) Parents at school and at meetings

- One of the areas in which most of the schools were doing well was the effort to try and accommodate parents whenever they visit schools. The majority of the parents indicated that they do receive invitations from the schools, even though a few parents complained about the invitations arriving late or in some cases not arriving at all. Invitation are normally in the form of letters, phone calls and sms.
- Whenever they visit the schools, the parents indicated that they are treated with courtesy and respect.
- The parents indicated that they are well accommodated in the meetings and they are given a chance to air their opinions.
- Most of the parents who volunteer at the schools volunteer to clean and offer security services. This could be due to their low-educational attainment, but the schools need to be encouraged to make use of the educated parents to come and volunteer to give career-related speeches, motivate learners, educators and fellow-parents and offer some specialist services to the schools like library services and health related talks among other things.

Objective 2: Explore barriers to teachers-parent collaboration in the Foundation Phase

The following are some of the summarised findings of the factors that were identified as barriers to PI, educator and learner performance:

a) Resources available within the schools

- The observation study and in the interviews with principals, showed that the schools are poorly resourced and there is need for urgent attention.
- Findings indicated that all the four schools have adequate classrooms and there is no more open-air air learning, but in some cases, the classes are still overloaded, the state of the building is very poor and in some cases the schools lack proper sanitation services such running tap water and flushing toilets.

- Most (if not all the schools) also lacked libraries, administration blocks, school halls, proper staff-rooms and workshops.

b) Barriers to parental involvement

- Barriers to PI in the four schools based on the principals, educators and parent's interviews include: illiteracy among parents, parents working far from schools/home, lack of effort and time from the parents, lack of opportunities to be involved, communication breakdown between schools and parents and the lack of training on PI on both the educators and parents' side.

c) Opportunities to enhance PI

- There are numerous ways and opportunities of parents to be involved in their children's school activities and these include extracurricular activities such as sports. Such extracurricular activities such as sports, games and clubs are known to be uniting as they offer home-school kindred and the participation of parents is likely to be enhanced and learners will gain from such involvement

Objective 3: Expectations required of teachers-parent collaboration

The reviewed literatures showed that:

- Parents are important stakeholders and their contribution as stakeholders in decision making is often mentioned as a significant avenue to enhancing public schools.
- Parental involvement has had an impact on the collaboration between parents and the school, and on learners' mindset, attendance, and learning (Miles, 2016:15).
- Accountability and responsibility are key elements towards developing schools that are self-directed and have learners performing at high levels of learning.
- Family units have a vital responsibility as partners in academic success, and the educators must do whatever is necessary to bring parents into the educational schema.

- Parents' decision to become involved is based on three general factors: (a) parents' beliefs that taking part in their children's learning is a part of their responsibility (parental role construction) and their evaluation of their capabilities in that regard (parenting self-efficacy), (b) parents' perception of invitations or demands from schools and teachers and from their children to be involved, and (c) demands on parents' time and energy that may conflict with involvement activities (for example, caring for other children, extended family responsibilities, demanding or inflexible work schedules) (Ackermann, 2015:27).
- The parents' decision to be involved, lead to the choice of involvement. The choice of involvement is influenced by specific domains of parents' skills and knowledge; mix with the demands on time and energy from other family and employment demands, and specific invitations and demands for involvement from children and school/teacher(s) (Shells, 2015:18).
- Children's valuation of education is directly linked to the expectations and values of their parents; home-based parental involvement is perceived as the primary means of stressing the importance of education.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed made based on the findings of the study:

a) It is recommended that the department of education give schools more powers and budget to implement their own programmes and maintain infrastructure

The study found that, most schools lack resources such as sanitary infrastructure, adequate classrooms, laboratories, sports fields, admin blocks and school halls among other important infrastructure. The introduction of the 'no-fee' schools policy meant that the government through the department of education provide funds to run schools. However in most cases these funds are not adequate to support schools programmes and the introduction of the policy made parents reluctant to participate financially in schools programmes and plans. To successfully implement the policy, the policy need to be well communicated to schools and be supported by relevant resources from the department of education. The department also needs to decentralize power and allow

schools to implement their own programmes based on the decisions made by the principals, parents and educators. Parents and communities are also urged to assist in fundraising to better equip schools, with facilities like sports fields and halls, so that they can effectively participate in school activities.

b) It is recommended that schools create partnership programmes with the parents and the community for their continual involvement.

It is known that PI provides an essential opportunity to enrich their existing programmes (Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017:149). To ensure effective parental involvement, schools may have partnership programmes in place that continually develop, implement, evaluate, and improve plans and practices encouraging family and community involvement. Schools can encourage involvement in several of areas including parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, decision-making, and community collaboration.

c) The researcher also suggests diversifying communication channels and options.

The study found that rural schools still use communication strategies which are believed not to be burdensome to both the school and parents such as letters. In most cases these communication strategies (school letters, parent/grade/class meetings and parent days) are old but still effective, but there is need to diversify these strategies to cater for the current generation of parents. This can be done by using internet based communication channels such as emails, instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and home-school diaries.

e) Educator training

The interviewed educators showed a high level of commitment, but their lack of knowledge with regard to PI was apparent and resulted this hampered the efforts for effective PI. Even though the educators were all well qualified, their training did not equip them well in PI thus it is recommended that the department of education provide in-service educator training with regard to PI which cover both the theoretical and the applied/practical component.

f) It is recommend that that parenting and teaching starts at home

The study found that most parents were illiterate and had very low educational levels and this made them feel inferior and ineffective when it comes to mediating learning at home and also made them avoid school gatherings. The lack of time and confidence concerning how to help their children. It is thus recommended that schools initiate programmes that would empower parents to supervise homework and to play a critical roles as their children's role models and thus boost parent's confidence to consult with educators and become more active in their children's education.

g) It is also recommended that parents participate in school functions and activities

When invited, it is recommended that parents participate in school activities and functions, fundraising projects and other initiatives that help them improve their own literacy and competency. Parents with skills such as handcraft, artwork, cultural activities and dances should be regularly invited to participate in programmes in the schools. Parent leaders need to be trained so that they lead fellow parents on how to initiate teaching and learning at home by reinforcing their academic skills in key areas. Parents also need to be taught on the importance of serving and volunteering in school committees and other school activities.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research study was limited to the Sibasa Circuit primary schools, in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province only. It is recommended, therefore, that in future, the study be expanded to other districts of the province as well, for a broader picture. Further, it is also recommended that future studies expand the scope to investigate the level of parental involvement in other phases such as intermediate and senior phases.

Learners, are also an important part of the school stakeholders, were not included as participants in this research. The purposive sampling method used in this research was

fairly small due to financial constraints and the requirements to include minors in the study. It is thus recommended that further studies include learners so as to establish a deeper understanding on the role parents play in their children's' education at this crucial phase of learning.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Foundation phase is a very critical phase in children's education journey as it sets the rest of their educational futures. The South African legislation empowers parents to participate in their children's education as stipulated in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. Despite all the supporting legislation and schools policies that encourage PI, there are still numerous factors that inhibit PI and learner performance in primary schools. The study main findings and recommendations based on the objectives stated in the first chapter were all outlined in this chapter.

The findings indicated that the involved schools are not well resourced in terms of infrastructure. Based on the interviews, the benefits of PI at the Foundation phase are well appreciated by the principals, educators and parents and despite that appreciations, barriers to effective PI were evident. These included parents low level education status, dysfunctional families, inadequate resources in schools, inadequately prepared teachers in terms of PI and poor communication between schools and parents. It was thus recommended that all stakeholders put measures and programmes in place for successful and effective PI particularly for learners in the Foundation phase for better educational outcomes.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: WRITTEN CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

AN ASSESSMENT OF TEACHER - PARENT COLLABORATION IN PROMOTING QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN FOUNDATIONAL PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF SIBASA CIRCUIT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

This Form is meant to check if you voluntarily agree to take part in the research.

Please place a cross (X) on the appropriate spaces on a questionnaire below:

- The researcher provided me with sufficient information about the nature of the study.
- I may decide to take part or not to take part in the study.
- I understand that I am free to refuse to participate in the study, and that I am not required to supply reasons thereof.
- I know that I can ask for further information regarding questions included in the interviews.
- I understand that all information arising from the interviews will be treated as confidential.
- I agree that tape recording will be used during interview sessions.
- I know that it will not be possible to identify any individual participant in the study report, including myself.
- I confirm that quotations from the interview can be used in the Final Research Report and other publications.
- I voluntarily agree to take part in the study

Signature: Participant Date:

Signature: Researcher Date:

ANNEXURE A: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Ref: 2/22 Enq: Mabogo MO Tel No: 016 380 9995 E mail: education@edu.gov.za

Murumwa N.B
P.O.Box 3491,
Sibasa
0970

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: **"AN ASSESSMENT OF TEACHER-PARENT COLLABORATION IN PROMOTING QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF SIBASA CIRCUIT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LIMPOPO PROVINCE."**
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the School concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in any way disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations, especially the fourth term.
 - 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
 - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MURUMWA N.B

CONFIDENTIAL

Cap. 113 Bleccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0780, Private Bag 10468, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7800, Fax: 015 297 8920/4220/4434

4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.



Ms NB Mutheniwana
Head of Department

16/10/19
Date

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MURUMWA, NB

CONFIDENTIAL

ANNEXURE B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOLS

Box 3491
SIBASA
0970
4 October 2019

The Circuit Manager
Sibasa circuit
SIBASA
0970

**Research Topic: AN ASSESSMENT OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS
COLLABORATION IN FOUNDATIONAL PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF SIBASA
CIRCUIT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.**

I am writing this letter to seek permission to conduct the above-mentioned research at your schools.

The project will involve principals, educators and parents. Interviews will be used for collecting data from participants. Semi-structured interviews and checklist will be used as tools during the data collection process.

Activities will not disturb the teaching-learning process at your school.

Yours faithfully
Murumwa NB

ANNEXURE : REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SCHOOLS

Box 3491
SIBASA
0970
01 November 2019

The Principal
Mamali Sikhwivhilu Primary School
Private Bag X 2506
SIBASA
0970

**Research Topic: AN ASSESSMENT OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS
COLLABORATION IN FOUNDATIONAL PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF SIBASA
CIRCUIT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.**

I am writing this letter to seek permission to conduct the above-mentioned research at your school.

The project will involve principals, educators and parents. Interviews will be used for collecting data from participants. Semi-structured interviews and checklist will be used as tools during the data collection process.

Activities will not disturb the teaching-learning process at your school.

Yours faithfully
Murumwa NB

ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW GUIDE: PRINCIPALS

GENERAL INFORMATION: PRINCIPAL

To be completed by the participant prior to the interview.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Names..... (to be coded later for anonymity)

Age.....

Marital status.....

Number of children.....

Where do your own children attend school?.....

Where do you live?.....

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Years of experience as principal:

Years of experience in this school:

INFORMATION ON THE SCHOOL

Name of school:

Explain the pressing needs your school currently has

A. INTRODUCTORY QUESTION

- How would you describe parents' attitudes and perceptions on education in this community?

B GENERAL INFORMATION ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT SCHOOL POLICY ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- What is the policy of this school on parental involvement?
- Is it a written policy/unwritten policy?

D PARENTAL GOVERNING STRUCTURES

- Is there a governing structure in place in this school?
- What is the nature of the governing structure?
- When was it established?
- What are the tasks of the school governing body?
- How often do they meet?
- Are there any other structures on which the parents serve?
- How does the SA legislation affect the school governing body and PI in this school?

C COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND FAMILY, AND VICE VERSA

- How do you pass information to parents or to guardians?
- Are there any opportunities for parents to come to school and talk with the teachers?
- How often are such opportunities created?

D PARENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

- In what ways do parents assist the school?
- If asked to help, who shows them or informs them what to do?

E PARENTS AND HOMEWORK

- To what extent are parents involved in their children's schoolwork/homework?
- How is this explained to them?
- What is the policy of the school with respect to involving parents in academic affairs?

H PARENTING

- Do you think parents in this community are bringing up their children in a correct manner?
- To what extent does the school assist the parents in their parenting task by for instance, having talks on topics, for example, the importance of school, health, discipline, getting involved in sports and other activities in schools, et cetera?

I COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- In what way is the community such as the church or business involved in the school?

J EXTERNAL FACTORS, THE SCHOOL AND THE FUTURE

- Do politics still have an influence on what is happening in the school?
- Do teachers' unions still play an important role? Please explain?
- How do you see the future of schools?

K PARENTING ROLES

- What is the role of the school in the upbringing and education of the child?
- If a child is not living with the parents, how do you see the role of the guardian?

L COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

- How often do you contact parents?
- Why do you contact them?
- How do you contact them?
- When are parents able to speak with you about their child?
- How often does this occur?

M PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- In your opinion, how would you define parental involvement?
- What experience have you had of parent involvement?
- What do you do as a principal to support parental involvement?
- In what ways are parents involved in your school?
- In what ways are parents involved in this school?

N ADVANTAGES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- Do you think parental involvement would be of benefit to the pupils, the school and teachers?
- In which ways?

O BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- What are the barriers to parent involvement in this school and in this community?

P TEACHER TRAINING AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- In what ways did your basic training equip you to work with parents?
- What have the years of experience as a teacher taught you in this regard?

Q THE SCHOOL AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- Who should initiate parental involvement - the school or the parent?
- What role does the principal play in home-school relations?
- In what ways can parental involvement be improved?
- What role would you like parents to play in this school?
- Do you think parents need to be trained to fulfill this role?

R FUTURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- What would be required so that you would involve parents more in school life?
- What should change within the school/educational system in order to make parents want to be more active in their children's education in the foundation phase?

S CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Is there anything else you need to add on this matter?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW GUIDE: TEACHERS

GENERAL INFORMATION: TEACHERS

To be completed by the participant prior to the interview.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Names..... (to be coded later for anonymity)

Age.....

Marital status.....

Number of children.....

Where do your own children attend school.....

Where do you live?

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Highest qualification:

Years of teaching experience:

Have you attended any workshops/courses on parental involvement?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: TEACHERS

A INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- Describe what it is like being a teacher in a public primary school (Describe a typical day/Describe an incident to illustrate)
- Has being a teacher in a public primary school changed in any way during the years?
Explain

B PARENTING

- How would you describe a 'good parent'?
- To what extent are parents in this community involved in the lives of their children?
- How do you describe the relationship between parents and their children?
- How do parents generally discipline their children?

C FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SCHOOLING

- What is the composition of the average household in this community (that is, single parent homes, extended families, nuclear families, et cetera)?
- What is family life like in your community (describe a typical day in the life of a family in this community)
- What influences does the family structure and the circumstances under which they live have on the child?
- What is the status of the child in the family?
- Who generally looks after the child after the school hours?

D GENERAL UPBRINGING/EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

- What is the role of the family in the upbringing of the child?

E COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

- How often do you contact parents?
- Why do you contact them?
- How do you contact them?
- When are parents able to speak with you about their child?
- How often does this occur?

F PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- In your opinion, what is the role of the parent in education?
- How would you define parental involvement?
- What experience have you had of parental involvement?
- What do you as a teacher do to support parental involvement?
- In what ways are parents involved in your class
- In what ways are parents involved in this school?

G ADVANTAGES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- Do you think parental involvement could be of benefit to pupils, the school and teachers?
- In what way?

H BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- What are the barriers to parents' involvement in this school and community?

I TEACHER TRAINING AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- In what way did your basic training equip you to work with parents?
- What has the years of experience taught you in this respect?

J THE SCHOOL AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- Who should initiate parental involvement-the school or the parent?
- What role does the principal play in home-school relations?
- In what ways can parent involvement be improved?
- What role would you like parents to play in this school?
- Do you think parents need to be trained to fulfill this role?

K FUTURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- What would be required so that you would involve yourself more in school life?
- What should change within the school/educational system in order to make you really want to be more active as a teacher?

L CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Is there any change in attitude to parent involvement following the No School Fees?
- How do you see your future as a teacher?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION: PARENTS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Names.....(to be coded later for anonymity)

Age.....

Marital status.....

Number of children.....

DETAILS OF THE PARENT

Where do you live?.....

What is the highest level of your education?.....

Explain your employment.....

Who is the breadwinner in the family?.....

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PARENTS

A. INTRODUCTORY QUESTION

- Describe what it is like being a parent in school A (Describe an incident to illustrate what it is like being a parent in your school).
- Who taught you to be a father/mother?
- Discuss the informal ways in which you were taught how to be a mother/father.
- Discuss the formal influences/training you had which helped you to bring up your children (that is, the influence of women/men's groups, the church, the school, et cetera).

B. CHILDREN AND CHILD CARE

- How do you see the value of children in the family-explain/give examples to illustrate
- What is your opinion of today's children?
- How do children spend their afternoons and weekends?
- Who disciplines the children at home?
- In what ways are children disciplined?
- If the mother/father works, and someone else cares for the children, who teaches the children what is right or wrong? How is it done?

C. HOMEWORK, EDUCATION AND PARENTS

- Do children get homework to do in the afternoons?
- How is this homework controlled?
- In what ways do you think parents should be involved in the education of their children at the Foundation phase?
- Would you like to be involved? Explain
- What prevents you from being more involved?

D. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND HOME

- How do you find out what is happening at school?
- How do you find out how your child doing at school?
- When you speak with your child's teacher, what does he/she tell you?
- Have you attended a class meeting at the school?
- How are you treated when you go to school, or phone the school or write to the school?

E. SCHOOL MEETINGS AND SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

- Does the school present concerts or sports days or any other social events/functions?
- How often do these take place?
- Do you attend? How often?
- When are parents' meetings held?
- What happens at parents' meetings?
- Do parents play a role at these meetings or functions/Do parents help to plan parents' meetings/Do they address parents at these meetings?

F. PARENTS AT THE SCHOOL

- Are parents asked to help at school? Give examples of such requested activities.
- Do parents help in the classroom? Explain.
- Do you think the school arranges enough opportunities to become involved in the schooling of their children?
- What else should the school be doing about this? Give suggestions.

G. BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT

- What do you find to be the most important obstacles for parents being involved in school life?
Explain
- Which resources does school need for more involvement of parents and how would the school use them?

H. PERCEPTIONS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BY THE PARENT

- Would it be important for you if you could be involved more in the school-life? Explain
- What are/would be your personal benefits of becoming more active?

I. FUTURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- What would be required so that you would involve yourself more in school life?
- What should change within the school/educational system in order to make you really want to be more active as a parent?

J. CONCLUDING REMARKS

- In what way would you like to be involved in the education of your children?
- How would you see the future of your children in South Africa?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

ANNEXURE E: SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Description of general school facilities:

Permanent classrooms	
Temporary classrooms	
Open-air teaching areas that serve as classrooms	
Walls-good condition/unstable/moving/crumbling	
Windows-glass in place/broken/no glass	
Roofing-good covering/caving in/open in places/leaking	
Floor-flat and smooth/uneven/potted/dusty/muddy	
Space-ample space for pupils to work/classroom crowded	

Description of toilet facilities

	TEACHERS				PUPILS			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Type of toilets	Working	Not Working	Working	Not Working	Working	Not Working	Working	Not Working
Pit latrines								
Flush toilets								
None								

School safety/security

Boundary wall/fence	
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School water supply

School water adequate/all time/sometimes	
Do pupils bring water to school?	
Is water safe for drinking?	

Facilities for co-curricular activities

Co-curricular facilities	
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Electricity/electronics

Electricity supply	Telephone	School radio	Television	Others

Reading facilities

Library	Workshops	Laboratory	School hall	Others

