# THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES INTHE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

*by*

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**UNIVERSITY OF VENDA**

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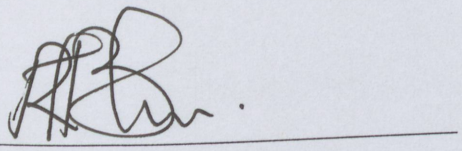
# DECLARATION

I, **BALOYI RISIMATI THOMAS** declare that '***The involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools'*** is my own work and that all sources used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This dissertation is original and it has never been submitted before for any degree or examination purposes, either in parts or as a whole. It is being submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Management in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Management, School of Education, University of Venda.



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# DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the late Khazamula Wilson Baloyi (1918–1995), my father, Hasani Simon Baloyi (1953–1999), my elder brother and M'sisinyani Edward Baloyi (1959–2005), my immediate brother. The three always believed in my capability when it came to educational matters, they were so supportive. My life and achievements will always be attributed to the inspiration they put in me while they were living. Their advice to me continues to resound beyond their deaths. For all my children, this serves as a benchmark beyond which you must achieve.



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# ABSTRACT

The study investigated the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit of Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. This study investigated the extent to which parents in those rural communities are involved in the education of their children in secondary schools. The study was conducted through mixed methodology research design. A total of 170 teachers completed questionnaires while eight parents were interviewed.

Simple random sampling was used to select teachers from the eleven secondary schools in a probability sampling technique during the first phase of the study. A non-probability purposive-judgemental sampling method was applied to further select eight School Governing Body (SGB) parents' component for face-to-face interviews during the second phase of this study. Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science 18 (SPSS 18). Qualitative data was coded into themes guided by the aims of the study. Results were presented with the help of tables showing frequencies and frequency percentages. The results showed that parents are not involved in the education of their children in secondary schools. It was also found that the majority of parents do not stay with their children as they work far from home.

**KEY WORDS**

Parents; parents' involvement; Education; Children; Rural communities; Secondary schools.



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# CHAPTER 1

# ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Researchers and educators have long agreed that when parents get involved in education, children try harder and achieve more at school (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jason & Van Voorhis, 2002). Parents who help and encourage their children to learn at home, and who help develop positive attitudes toward school, contribute to the personal growth and academic success of their children (Maynard & Howley, 1997). This is an empirical-interpretative study which intends to investigate the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools. In this chapter I present the general background of this study, followed by the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, critical research questions, empirical design and research methodology, delimitation of the study, ethical considerations, and significance of this study, organisation of chapters and conceptual clarifications and theoretical framework of this study.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The significance of parents' involvement has been advocated not only in South Africa as presented in the South African Schools Act 84 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), but also in other countries. Omotesu (2010) in Nigeria has indicated that the first community of contact for most children as soon as they are born to the world is the family. The family exerts an influence on the child, it is from parents and the significance others that the child is able to acquire initial training. In the United States of America, Berger (2011) mentions that the importance of parents in the education of their children is not a new concept, and parents have been their children's first educators since pre-historic times. Although Lemmer (2007) attributes the involvement of parents in the education of their children more on



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financial management and participative volunteering, the Michigan Department of Education (2010) mentions the significance of parents in terms of the establishment of a daily family routine, monitoring out-of-school activities, modelling of the value of learning, self-discipline and hard work, expression of high but realistic expectations for achievement, encouraging children's developmental progress in school, and encouraging reading, writing, and discussions among family members.

My study focused on parents who are from rural communities, in an attempt to unearth their behaviour in respect of getting involved in school activities. Kgaffe (2001) notes that the interaction between educators and parents is more complex than one would imagine. The intervention of the farm owner and the headman forms a hierarchical structure that parents and educators have to overcome on matters relating to education of the learners. Kgaffe (2001) goes on to indicate that currently, most rural communities are characterised by poverty, economic and political disempowerment, lack of facilities and limited range of employment possibilities.

Serote (2001) indicates that the school is an institution which is established to meet the academic needs of the community that operates in a social and cultural context. Together with other institutions such as the home and the church, the school can achieve its objective of educating the children, but not on its own. Gaonnwe (2005) indicates that the universal role of the school is to educate, and education in rural areas is regarded as means of bringing about change for the betterment of individuals in their community. Gaonnwe (2005) mentions further that communities in the new South Africa want their voices to be heard, to participate fully in the political, economic and social life of the nation. The school, therefore, should provide the rural population with the instruction that will enable them to achieve more.



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Rural communities, like all other communities, are interested in the education of their children, and Gaonnwe (2005) asserts that better education can only be realised when parents in the community know what their school is doing to assist their children to realise their goal. Communities, particularly rural communities, have to work together since they have common interests. Like Serote (2001) and Gaonnwe (2005), Lemmer (2007) adds that good school, family and community partnerships lead to improved academic learner achievement, self-esteem, improved school attendance and better school behaviour. Serote (2001), Gaonnwe (2005), Lemmer (2007) and Schargel and Smink (2001) indicate that parents are chief contributors in their children's education.

Despite the prioritisation of the provision of quality education to all learners by the South African government, not all learners' or children's needs are being met. In secondary schools, a considerable proportion of learners repeat their grades each year, particularly since the inception of the National Curriculum Statement (Kgaffe, 2001). Kgaffe (2001) goes on to indicate that improvements in the education system to date have not focused on increased parental involvement. According to Kgaffe (2001), although parents have since 1997 been encouraged to participate in the running of school activities in School Governing Bodies, their involvement has been minimal. Gianzero (1999) claims that when schools work together with families to support children in their educational activities, beyond the limits of taking part in school governing bodies, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. In addition, Gianzero (1999) further finds that the shared interests and investments of schools, families, and communities, particularly rural communities, create the conditions of caring that work to over determine the likelihood of a students to succeed in education.



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Following Gianzero's (1999) findings, there is a notable setback in rural communities that parents are either not participating in school activities for their children, or are not involved in their children's education at all. Based on this background, my study is intended to investigate the extent of parents' involvement in the education of their children in rural communities. To concur with Gianzero (1999), Epstein et al. (2002) indicate that parents' involvement guarantees a remarkable educational growth and significant academic improvement of learners, an increment in teachers' morale and effort, and a tremendous growth in parental support for schools and the learning of learners. On the other hand, passive or lack of parent involvement and participation in the education of their children lead to poor performance (Makhwatana, 2007).

Hamunyela (2008) contends that parental involvement is an integrative kind of thinking and approach to school improvement now emerging from education systems especially with respect to the learning of learners. The rationale of parents' involvement is rooted in the belief that in order for schools to educate all youth effectively, parents and families from different socio-economic status of communities should become fully involved in the process of educating learners (Hamunyela, 2008).

## 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) stipulate that a research problem should be formally stated to indicate the need for the research study. Despite scholars proving that intensive parent involvement in the education of their children yields better results, many parents particularly in the rural areas, seem to be leaving educational issues of their children in the hands of educators (Kgaffe, 2001). Educators in schools desire parental support of their learners for effective learning.



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## 1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

Against the background provided, the aims of this study were:

- to inquire into the involvement of parents in rural communities in facilitation of their children's education,
- to empirically assess parents in rural communities' involvement on their children's secondary education, and
- to develop a model through which parents should be involved in the education of their children.

## 1.5 CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the listed aims of the study, the following research questions served as a guide during the process of my study:

- What role do parents in rural communities play in facilitating their children's education at secondary school?
- What contributions do parents in rural communities make with regard to their children's secondary schooling?
- What model can be developed to assure maximum parents involvement for quality education of their children at secondary schools?

## 1.6 HYPOTHESES

For the purpose of this study, I hypothesised that there would be a correlation between:

- the role played by parents in rural communities in their children's secondary school education and the education which they obtain from the relationship, and



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- the parents in rural communities' involvement in the education of their children and the level of success in terms of secondary education of their children.

## 1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section the design of the empirical investigation and methodology which was used to investigate the research problem is described. Following Johnson and Christensen (2000), a research design refers to the outline plan or framework used to seek an answer to a research question. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) describe research methodology as systematic and purposeful ways of collecting and analysing data. On the other hand De Vos et al. (2005) claim that research methodology indicates the procedure to be followed for data collection and analysis, and reporting of the findings.

This study combined both quantitative and qualitative research designs, a mixed methodology type of research design. The design was adopted in order to acquire a complete understanding of parents' involvement in the education of their children at secondary schools.

### 1.7.1 Quantitative research design

Phase 1 of the study applied quantitative survey questionnaires in order to obtain a large quantity of data from a large population. A survey questionnaire was applied to sampled teachers in order to establish parents' involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools.

### 1.7.2 Qualitative research design

Phase 2 of this study used qualitative research through face-to-face interviews in order to obtain a deeper understanding of parents' involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools from fewer selected SGB parents' components.



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Qualitative studies was used to provide an in-depth and detailed inferences to the generalised and superficial view of parents' involvement as revealed during the quantitative phase of this research (Firestone, 1987).

### 1.7.3 Research methodology

The following sub-sections provide methodology on how I conducted my study during the two distinctive phases of the study.

- **Population of the study**

The population of this study was parents from rural communities who have their children attending secondary school in any of the eleven secondary schools under the Malamulele East Circuit in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province in South Africa. In 2011, there was a total of 5 837 learners from the twenty-four villages attending the eleven secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit. The learners are taught by a total of 239 educators (see Annexure D: Population Statistics of the Malamulele East Circuit).

### PHASE 1 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this sub-section, the methodology that was employed during the first phase of the study is presented.

- **Sampling**

Punch (2005) defends the idea behind sampling by indicating that researchers select samples and collect data only from the sample because they cannot study the whole population. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) indicate that sampling involves selecting units of analysis (for example, people, groups, artifacts, settings) in a manner that maximises the researcher's ability to answer research questions set forth in a study. This study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to select the sample from which the inferences were made.



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Random sampling allows anyone in the population to have an equal chance of being selected in the study, thus minimising biasness of the study's findings (Babbie& Mouton, 2009). A simple random sampling method was applied to select a total of 170 from the 239 educators in the eleven secondary schools to complete the survey questionnaires based on their perceptions of parents' involvement in the education of their children at their respective secondary schools. An alphabetical list of the 239 educators in the Malamulele East Circuit was drawn from which, the first eighty-five (85) and the last eighty-five (85) were simply selected randomly for the sample.

- **Instrumentation**

During the first phase of my study, I applied self-constructed and pre-tested survey questionnaires. The questionnaires consist of two sections. Section A is made up of four items which sought biographical details from the respondents. Section B is made up of twenty-nine items which focused on parents' involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools. All items were closed-ended items, using a Likert scale from which respondents indicated whether they strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements to be made. The survey questionnaires were pre-tested at the school where I am working before distribution to the educators' respondents from the eleven secondary schools in the Malamulele Eat Circuit. Pre-testing was meant to rectify any misunderstanding that could arise from the statements, and were not included in the total 170 that were finally distributed and collected.

- **Data collection procedure**

In consultation with the circuit manager and the principals of the eleven secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit, a total of 170 survey questionnaires were distributed and received the following day. The details of all steps and procedures that were followed in the collection process are documented in chapter 3 of this study.



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- **Data analysis**

White (2005) indicates that descriptive statistics are used when analyzing quantitative data. To start the analysis with an error–free data, I created a data file to capture data through the variables tabled on a computer Microsoft-excel spread sheet, and the captured data was double-checked to verify any errors that might have occurred in the entering process to the computer. I used a Microsoft-excel spread sheet only to capture data. The captured data were imported to a computer aided with the software programme, Statistical Package for Social Sciences 18 (SPSS 18), for analysis.

## PHASE 2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this sub-section, the methodology that was used during the second qualitative face-to-face interview phase of the study is presented.

- **Sampling procedure**

A sample for this phase of the study was drawn from four of the eleven secondary schools from which this study was undertaken. A non-probability sampling technique was applied to purposefully select eight SGB parents' component members. In the sample, only SGB chairpersons and treasurer were selected as a criterion to obtain only the parents' component in the sample. A total of eight SGB parent components were interviewed though a face–to–face interview which allowed also informal observations to be noted.

- **Instrumentation**

An interview schedule which was made up of only one open-ended question was applied. The single question was meant to probe the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools. Other secondary questions unfolded based on the extent to which parents are involved in



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the education of their children in secondary schools. The interview question that was used as the opening question for all the eight interviewed parents was: "*Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?*"

- **Data collection procedure**

A face-to-face in-depth interview was applied from eight parents (four SGB chairpersons and four treasurers) in their home language in order to probe a deeper understanding on the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools. An N96 digital cellular phone was used to record all conversations without videotaping the individual participants. The participants were interviewed in their home language, Xitsonga and the texts were translated and transcribed verbatim to English by an appointed and experienced professional interpreter.

- **Data analysis**

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) indicate that qualitative data analysis starts in the field during data collection and continues even as research reports are written. For this study, data was transcribed verbatim and presented within themes that arose from the first quantitative phase of the study. Themes that arose from texts were presented in support of the interpretations of Phase 1 data and are documented in Chapter 4 of this study.

## 1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

My study was restricted to secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit of the Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province. I identified Malamulele East Circuit as one of the areas which contains most rural communities in the Thulamela Municipality. This follows after most of the families in the area live under the conditions which are below the poverty datum line. Furthermore, I purposefully chose the schools because the language spoken in that region is my home language which I understand very well and I did not want to make use of interpreters



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during the interview process. However, a professional interpreter was used for translation purposes. Fluency and clear understanding of the language as a researcher afforded me the benefits of clear communication and understanding of the responses of the research participants, particularly in Phase 2 of data collection process which applied face-to-face interviews.

## 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Piper and Simons (2005) describe ethical issues in research as an action of conducting research that benefits respondents or participants in positive ways, an ethical act of doing no harm to research respondents or participants. In this study, the ethical issues stem from the manner in which I acted towards my selected human subjects. The ethical issues that were followed in this study were applied in line with the appropriateness of the study's methodology and also highlighted all the morality of humankind as possible. The following ethical issues were considered for this study:

- **Informed consent**

The purpose of the study was clearly explained to both the respondents on completing the questionnaire survey and the participants before the interview sessions. A cover letter requesting the respondents was provided, explaining the value and the purpose of the study (and has further been attached as part of the Annexures). All the participants were notified of how the information that they contribute was going to be utilised. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) indicate that it is the research's code of ethics that participants must agree voluntarily to participate without any physical or psychological coercion. After my consultation with the Vhembe District Department of Education (see Annexure B: approval letter), the Malamulele East Circuit manager, school principals and teachers were informed by the circuit manager and further asked to sign the consent letter (see Annexure E) during the first phase of the study to verify their willingness to take part in the



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study. Selected parent representatives were asked orally to give their consent for participating in the study. The consent form indicated clearly that their participation is voluntarily.

- **Confidentiality and anonymity**

During the data collection process, both respondents and participants were informed of their right not only to talk in confidence, but also to refuse to allow publication of any information that they think might harm them in any way. They were also assured that their refusal to take part is not punishable lawfully or in any other way. With regard to their identities, I simply opted to call the schools with letters, for example, School A, and change participants' real names into pseudonyms by using the portfolios that they hold in the SGB executive committee, for example, Madam Treasurer. Limitations of this code of ethics arise when some participants want their voice to be published with their real names included. However, in this study no participant ever indicated that they would like their name to be published.

- **Respect for respondents**

My study did not at any stage intimidate the respondents and was characterised by mutual respect throughout the process. Above the respect for respondents, this study ensured that no deceptions of respondents occurred. I also ensured that there was no misinterpretation or deliberate misrepresentation of facts provided by the respondents.

## 1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was intended to provide knowledge and insight relevant to the practical genuine problems that are experienced in the South African rural communities. The findings of this study will be made available to the local circuit office, Malamulele East, and through the hierarchy of governance, the findings



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together with recommendations will hopefully reach the National Department of basic Education for consideration. It would also help researchers to implement intervention strategies that will assist in the improvement of parents' involvement in the school, particularly learners from poor families and enhance policy formulation to be implemented by educators as a way of promoting the performance of all learners.

Through the study, I also hope to find manageable ways of involving parents in their children's education, to the benefit of learners, their parents, their teachers and all other stakeholders involved in the education of South African poor children. It is my hope in this study that through the implementation of all or some of the recommendations, parents would recognise the importance of their role in the schools where their children are enrolled, leading to improved learner performance for a better academic results and ultimately for improved standards of living of people in rural communities.

## 1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH CHAPTERS.

The report of this study was organised into five chapters. Each of the chapters dealt with specific aspects of investigation, however, the aspects are interrelated. Following this, **Chapter 1**, which presents the background of the study, objectives and critical research questions, an overview of the study's design and methodology, delimitations, ethical considerations and the significance of the study, the remainder of the research report is structured as follows:

**Chapter 2 Literature review on parent involvement**

Relevant literature that is related to parents' involvement in the education of their children at secondary schools is documented in this chapter. The chapter was concerned with the general background of the conceptual framework that has informed the phenomenon under study, parents' involvement. A review of



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literature on the experiences of parents in poor rural villages and farming communities in terms of their involvement in the education of their children has also been documented later in this chapter. Barriers to the involvement of parents in rural communities in the educational activities of their children are outlined in this chapter, followed by possible solutions to minimize their effects.

**Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter provides details with regard to the methodology that was applied to investigate the involvement of parents in the education of their children at secondary schools. Both of the reasons for the choice and use of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms are distinctively provided in this chapter. Data collection strategies, description of the research plans' instruments, ethical considerations, recording and transcribing of the data is provided in this section.

**Chapter 4 Data presentation, analysis and interpretation**

In this chapter, a presentation, analysis and interpretation of both data obtained from the first quantitative phase and the second qualitative phases of the study is made. Data presentation is outlined in the form of tables, which are subsequently be followed by discussions of interpretations. The chapter concludes with the provision of a summary of the main ideas that will are discussed in both sections.

**Chapter 5 Synthesis, findings, recommendations and conclusion**

In this chapter I documented synthesised discussions of findings, recommendations for educational provisions and recommendations for future research study on a related topic. The chapter presents the end product of what I have studied. A further summary of the main findings from both phase 1 quantitative approach and Phase 2 qualitative approach of the study respectively is presented. The summarised main findings from both phases confirm the initial hypothesis and assumptions that were earlier made in terms of the study's expectations.



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## 1.12 SUMMARY

In this chapter, an introductory overview of the intended study has been presented. The view of what the reader should expect in the research study has also been provided. The problem of the research project was provided and elucidated. The aims of the research were clearly stated to indicate what I intend to achieve with the establishment of a participative study on the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools. The aims were followed by critical research questions which complement one another. The research designs and methodology were explicitly stated so that the reader is clear of all the procedures to be followed throughout the processes of the study, and finally the plan of the study was provided. The orientation of the study provided in this chapter serves as a point of departure for the presentation of literature study in the next chapter.



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# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The first part of this section provides a conceptual framework of the study, followed by the presentation of a thematic literature review on the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children at secondary schools. The preliminary literature is reviewed from a broader global context, to the South African context of parents' involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools. The purpose of a literature review is for the literature to become a valuable source of input for the whole research study process (Punch, 2005). Babbie and Mouton (2009) indicate that a literature review empowers researchers to be able to challenge the previously accepted ideas. In this chapter literature that is related to the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools is reviewed.

Included in this chapter is the conceptual framework of the study, perspectives of parental involvement on learner achievement, partnerships of parents, educators and principals in creating a culture of learning and teaching, perceptions of home reading activities, parents' involvement on current curriculum, significance and advantages of parents involvement in schools, models of parental involvement, socio-cultural, economic and parental educational factors affecting parents involvement in the education of their children. Challenges facing parents' involvement and their possible solutions are also reviewed from a South African context. The chapter closes by reviewing literature on the regulatory framework which encourages the relationships between schools, parents and communities.



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It is widely recognised that if learners are to maximise their potential from schooling, they will need the full support of their parents (Epstein, Sanders & Sheldon, 2006). Parents are anticipated to play a role not only in the promotion of their own children's achievements but more broadly in school improvement and the democratisation of school governance (Desforges, 2003). Hamunyela (2008) contends that parental involvement is an integrative kind of thinking and approach to school improvement now emerging from education systems especially with respect to learners' learning, the rationale of parents' involvement is rooted in the belief that in order for schools to educate all youth effectively, parents and families from all socio-economic types of communities should become fully involved in the process of educating learners. This literature review draws on sources of both quantitative and qualitative research designs, since the study is placed over a mixed approach of research design.

## 2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Punch (2005) asserts that conceptual framework of research studies addresses the researchers' understanding of the topic explicitly. Therefore, the conceptual framework for this study presents the clarifications of the key concepts as provided in the subject of the study (topic). With the clarification of terms being considered to be more appropriate in the beginning of this study, theories and other perceptions of different scholars as well as the regulatory framework on parental involvement will be discussed in subsequent sections of the study. In this pre-study presentation, the clarified concepts are provided in alphabetical order as parent, parent involvement and rural communities.

A parent is described by Kgaffe (2001) as any older person (non-biological parent or biological parent) male/female, single/married who is responsible for raising a child, caring for a child or taking the general responsibility of a child. Morrison (1978) defines the parent as the one who provides the child with a basic care,



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direction, support, protection and guidance. The implication is that a parent could be a natural parent, an aunt, an uncle or any adult related to the child. The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) indicates that a parent is the natural parent of a learner, the guardian of a learner, a person legally entitled to custody (physical control) of a learner, or a person who undertakes to act as a parent of a learner for the purposes of the learners' education at school.

Parent involvement is described by Henderson and Mapp (2002) as getting parents involved in learning activities of their children at home, including helping with reading skills and checking homework, supervising children and monitoring how they spend their time out of school, talking about school and what children are learning, attending school events, going to parent-teacher conferences, meeting with teachers and volunteering in the classroom or school. Before Henderson and Mapp (2002), Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) attributed parent involvement to a hands-on approach in which parents closely discuss school activities, monitor out-of-school activities, are always in contact with the school staff, volunteer and attend parents-teacher conferences and other school events. In this study, parent involvement refers to the support of parents in school activities in and out of school for the benefit of learners' academic achievement and school effectiveness.

Parents' involvement in education has been differently described but focus on participation of parents in the education of their children. Although both teachers and parents agree that home-school communication is essential to effective parental involvement, other components of the definition are not as easily agreed upon (Shearer, 2006). Of late, parents' involvement had been defined as families and communities who take an active role in creating a caring educational environment (Omoteso, 2010). Scholars such as Epstein et al. (2002) simply identify components of parental involvement, rather than provide a clear cut definition, for example, parents as volunteers and facilitators of children's development. Flaxman and Inger (1992) identify two ways in which parents



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become involved in schools, that is, participation in special parenting programmes and providing support programmes. The most common themes articulated by researchers are summarised by Epstein's (2006), six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

Today, education policies in South Africa articulate the realisation of what education systems cannot possibly achieve if schools alone are seen as being responsible for learners' learning. For example, The South African Schools Act 84 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) provides for parents to become actively involved in school matters. The Act stimulates new field-level of thinking about what it takes to educate children of the 21st century (Hamunyela, 2008). The African proverb, 'it takes a village to educate a child' (Brown, 2001) holds that in the learning process of children all complementary learning supports, including family support and family involvement, to promote children's learning and to contribute to their schools' success should be brought in. Complementary learning support forms a framework for aligning multiple resources and building on their strengths for a more effective way to improve children's learning (Rothstein, 2005). Wanghid (2002) indicates that the contemporary South African education is dominated by debates surrounding the quality and effectiveness in relation to the implementation of a measurement driven functional education policies. Amongst other things, the policies include the involvement of parents in the education of their own children, particularly in rural schools.

Following Wanghid (2002) observations, the education of children in South Africa or even worldwide, should be a joint endeavour between home and school. Parents' involvement strengthens this bond of partnership and is seen by Rothstein (2005) as a productive relationship between home and the educational setting in which the practitioners are responsible for involving parents in the



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work that they do for educational reasons. For example, carrying out the parental role of motivating children for school matters at home, practicing reading under the guidance of parents at home, parents communicating with teachers regularly and collaboration between the school, parents and the community (Epstein, 2006).

## 2.3 PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

Learners' achievement is influenced by many factors which include people, processes and institutions, parents, the broader family, peer groups, neighbourhood influences, schools and other bodies like churches or clubs. These groups are all implicated in shaping children's progress towards their self-fulfillment and citizenship (Desforges, 2003). Hamunyela (2008) indicates that children who are in discomfort pay less attention than children who are not in discomfort. Furthermore, Hamunyela (2008) indicates that children stay away from school and they do not learn if they are distracted by health problems, unsuitable clothing or malnutrition problems. Singh et al. (2004), assert that parents send their children to schools with the expectation that they will get quality education in order to secure their future with a decent vocation. Singh et al. (2004) further allude that throughout the world there are efforts to involve parents in education as schools strive to improve the quality of their teaching. They give examples which include the United States of America, whereby parents in most schools are actively involved leading to better achievement in the educational matters by their children.

In contrast, Desforges (2003) in his study of the impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievements and adjustment, mixed feelings emerged; the study found that parental involvement had no effect whatsoever on pupil achievement or adjustment. Okpala, Okpala and Smith (2001), indicate that studies which investigated the relationship of parents involvement in terms of hours volunteered in school help had no remarkable



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positive results, whereas on the other hand, pupil achievement improves significantly when parents keep in touch with teachers in the school where their children learn.

To support parents involvement in terms of improving the achievement of learners regardless of their socioeconomic background, Moloi et al. (2010) claim that some historically black schools manage to do quite well despite their circumstances, such as dire poverty. To reconcile Okpala et al. (2001), and Moloi et al.'s (2010) ideas, Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) and Creemers and Kyriakides (2009) found that educational effectiveness in terms of improved learner achievement reveal that the influences of parental involvement on learner achievement are both integrated and multifaceted in nature. On the other hand, other researchers like Matthews (2005) suggest that parent involvement may not be the most influential factor in improving academic outcomes. For instance, a study conducted in California by Matthews (2005) indicates that while parent involvement was positively correlated with academic achievement, other factors such as teacher quality and the alignment of curriculum to state academic standards had more of an impact on student performance. However, most literature like Henderson and Mapp (2002) suggests that parent and community involvement activities that are linked to student learning have a greater effect on academic achievement than more general forms of involvement.

## 2.4 PARTNERSHIPS OF PARENTS, EDUCATORS AND PRINCIPALS IN CREATING A CULTURE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

In almost any discussion about children's education, most parents stress the importance of learning to read and write (Griffiths & Hamilton, 1984). Ngidi and Qwabe (2006) write that parents, educators and principals as a group are all concerned with the partnership that should normally exist to encourage the culture of learning and teaching, regardless of socio-economic status in general.



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Nevertheless, Ngidi and Qwabe (2006) further identifies that parents, educators and principals in the partnership differs significantly to the extent to which each member component understand the role played by another in the common objective of learners effective learning. Ngidi and Qwabe (2006) further mention that to encourage the culture of learning and teaching for all learners, including learners from poor families, a joint partnership which is built up of parents, educators, principals, learners themselves, ward managers and district managers, regional managers and other more senior officials in the Department of Education, which includes the minister can play a major role in this regard. However, no further explanation is provided above contributing a significant role in working together. According to Ngidi and Qwabe (2006) inclusivity in education can help alleviate improper functioning of educational institutions.

To Griffiths and Hamilton (1984), children learn first and foremost from their parents, guardians or care-givers, following this respect, all parents, guardians or care-givers are teachers. To support Griffiths and Hamilton (1984), Henderson and Mapp (2002) emphasise that a strong pre-primary education for a child takes place in the family atmosphere, To Omoteso (2010), families exert a lot of influence on the child before he or she could enter formal education at primary level. Omoteso (2010), a Nigerian scholar, indicates that although parents have the obligation of guiding their children more than educators at a formal sitting at school, most parents do not have time for their children because of the economic down turn in Nigeria. Similarly, parents from the rest of the world who are economically disadvantaged are withdrawn, although other children from advantaged homes happen to be neglected by their parents when it comes to assisting their children achieve better at schools. Instead, Omoteso (2010) claims that parents who engage more on their jobs and businesses unlike in the past, when mothers did not have to work, but stayed at home to take care of their children and see the total welfare of their children, have little or no time to guide their children in educational matters.



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During their study examining the underutilisation of parent involvement in the schools, Gonzalez-DeHass and Willemms (2003) note that parental involvement in public schools has been documented as academically beneficial by educational researchers. They refer to involvement of parents in terms of attendance of meetings at school, where issues which affect the children academically are discussed. The idea is supported by Greenwood and Hickman (1991) who is further applauded by many educators and individuals in the general public. They indicate that partnerships which include parent involvement in the schools has been found far and wide, to bear positive results evidence of which is displayed on students variables such as better academic achievement, homework readiness, grades and educational aspirations.

## 2.5 PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOME READING ACTIVITIES

Johnson et al. (2010) claim that children learn more when parents help them in story-book reading at home and help their children to understand the meaning of what is being read. Johnson et al. (2010) indicate that as children become more advanced in listening to story reading, parents' reading styles change as larger sections can be read without interruption. The opportunities to observe and participate in home reading activities acquaint children with the nature and functions of written language. The benefits that are presented by Johnson et al. (2010) are not without shortcomings, because they indicate that environmental elements such as lack of a library and well-typed reading materials, hinders the working capacities of parents who are willing to assist their children at home.

With regard to the provision of enough resources by parents for their children to increase the intellectual quotient, Johnson et al. (2010) support Greaney and Hegarty (1987) in that parents who expect their children to do well at school, are more likely to provide books and academic games for their children and take them to the library. Sheldon and Epstein (2005) found that parent involvement activities



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have a greater effect on academic achievement when the form of involvement revolves around the provision of specific academic needs by the parents. A further example of parent involvement include activities that engage families and children in discussing Mathematics at home which was found to contribute to higher performance by secondary school students (Tonn, 2005). However, the shortcoming of Tonn's (2005) idea is that very few parents are able to assist their children on Mathematical variables. Based on findings by Greaney and Hegarty (1987), Sheldon and Epstein (2005) and Tonn (2005), the question which arises is whether parents in the rural communities have enough resources to improve their children's intellectual quotient or not, or are they leaving everything to the hands of teachers at school. Both Greaney and Hegarty (1987) and Johnson et al. (2010) find that besides environmental aspects, parental roles and attitudes towards the learning process of their children are of utmost importance, the later close their discussion by indicating that children's responses and attitudes to, for example, negative attitudes towards reading practices at home, have an influence on the learning development of children.

Motseke (2009) in his paper on why Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) is failing in the township schools of the Free State Goldfields, indicates amongst other things that home backgrounds of learners, as well as their economic and social circumstances plays an important role in their linguistic and educational development. His idea supports earlier claims made by Coltrane (2003), Sibaya et al. (1996), and Van der Horst and McDonald (1997) that the family background of learners has an effect on learner achievement at school. Following Coltrane (2003) and Motseke (2009), learners who come from an advantaged background have more educational advantages than those from disadvantaged backgrounds. To Motseke (2009), township schools are characterised by most learners coming from backgrounds that are characterised by lack of books, television and internet access, this entire conditions are identical to families in rural communities.



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## 2.6 PARENTS INVOLVEMENT AND THE CURRENT CURRICULUM

South Africa has, since the demise of apartheid, been subjected to a series of curriculum changes to attempt redress the past injustices. The current curriculum allows parents to play a more important role in assisting their children at home, for example, most learning areas have activities directing learners to seek guidance from their parents, care-givers or guardians at home, now the question which arises is whether they are on board or not since some of these parents or care-givers are illiterate. Motseke (2009) found that effective participation of parents in terms of getting involved in their children's homework only goes to the middle-class parents, parents who are literate or educated and parents who took their children to former model C schools. According to Motseke (2009), in the majority of township schools, parents are illiterate and therefore, not actively involved in the education of their children. This means that they leave everything in the hands of teachers. For this reason, many respondents in Motseke's (2009) study indicate that they believe the illiteracy of parents negatively affects the learning of their children.

Steyn and Van Wyk (1999) report that educated parents find the current curriculum, which calls for their engagement in their children's activities, to increase their workload and inversely, it makes it difficult for them to identify learners' problems at school. On the other hand, Motseke (2009) finds that teachers at school indicate that their work load is increased since they have to cover even the roles that should be played by a parent at home, this applies to a case where learners are from poor, illiterate family backgrounds. Apart from illiteracy and poverty, Steyn and Van Wyk (1999) add that in some township schools, parents have negative attitudes on engaging themselves in important school matters, to these parents, educators are paid a lot of money to teach their children and that they are not expected to do anything else that is supposed to be done by the educators.



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## 2.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Gianzero (1999) attributes the benefits of parental involvement in schools being more important for children's successes at school. The successes are only accomplishable if families become strong in terms of supporting their children who are attending school, regardless of the family background. Gianzero (1999) goes on to mention that a strongly bonded family-school relationship improves the student's attitude, achievement and attendance.

In the United States of America, The Michigan Department of Education (2010) mentions that children spend about 70% of their waking time outside school, and for this reason, parental intervention is highly significant. Furthermore, it is indicated that when parents are to get involved in the education of their children, the child's educational process shall begin to be more powerful in its effects. In most cases, the most effective form of parent involvement is the one which engages parents to work directly with their children on learning activities at home (Michigan Department of Education, 2010). Dauber and Epstein (1993), Henderson and Berla (1995) and Henderson and Mapp (2002) concur with the Michigan Department of Education that the general public believes that support from parents is the most important way to improve schools and lack of parental involvement is the biggest problem facing public schools. Furthermore, when parents are involved there is an increase in test scores, graduation rates, better school attendance, lower rates of suspension, improved learner discipline, decreased use of drugs and alcohol and fewer instances of violent behaviour. The Michigan Department of Education (2010) adds that family participation in education was twice as predictive of students' academic success. To add to the Michigan Department of Education's (2010) view, Beaumont et al. (2011) mention that parents should want their children to have the best chance for success, which today means more than just a high school education.



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Keith (2011) indicates that the more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects, the more parents participate in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level and in advocacy, decision-making and oversight roles like fundraisers and boosters, or volunteering and para-professionals, and as home teachers, the better will be the student's achievement. The idea behind Keith's (2011) view embraces activities such as parents volunteering, participating in decision-making processes, and taking part also in collaboration activities of the school and community as a whole.

Beaumont et al. (2011), like the Michigan Department of Education (2010) emphasise the fact that although most parents in rural communities do not know how to help their children with their education, they may become increasingly involved in home learning activities, guidance and with educational support. Parents, despite their socioeconomic status, find themselves with opportunities to teach, opportunities to be models for and to guide their children (Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, and De Pedro, 2011). Schools that encourage children to practice reading at home with parents, and children who follow suit make significant gains in the process compared to those who only practice reading at school (Beaumont, 2011; Smith et al., 2011 & Keith, 2011). Parents who read to their children, or have books available for their children, take educational trips with their children, guide television (TV) watching, and provide stimulating experiences contribute more on student achievement than the opposite (Smith et al., 2011), and the evidence of success has been seen in a large number of high school graduates.

To summarise the significance of parents' involvement in the education of their children at secondary schools, Wherry (1997), highlights the fact that through parents' involvement, parents and schools are able to share common goals. According to Wherry (1997), parents' involvement should therefore continue beyond childhood and all school programs must include all families. Parental



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involvement programs should make teachers job easier and programme development should not be quick; instead there should be grants to encourage participation from the parents (Wilson, 2002). Wilson (2002) also suggests that family-school coordinators should be put in place and all programs need room for parents whereby parents make use of technology such as TV, audio- and videotapes, and computers to help improve parents' involvement with schools setting a tone that in simple terms makes itself inviting the parents to fit into the school programs. However, the short coming in Wilson's (2002) idea is that most parents in rural communities do not have or are unable to use such media.

According to Epstein (2006), school-family connections, give rise to a better understanding of how home, school, and community can work together to encourage and support learning and development of children. Children from pre-school, through elementary, middle and high school levels learn and grow at home, at school and in the community. Based on the premise of the children's learning, Epstein (2006) notes the importance of parents in all families of getting involved in their children's education from the earliest years and onwards. In addition, the manner in which educators and families should plan, implement, evaluate and continually improve partnership programs and practices that will help students succeed at school should not be ignored.

## 2.8 ADVANTAGES OF PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

In the investigation of what actually works in terms of parental involvement in the education of parents' children, Goldberg (2007) indicates that it is the priority in most of our schools, making demands on our time, energy and resources to seek for the optimum functioning that drives towards the greatest positive impact on student achievement. Henderson and Mapp (2002) state that reflective programs of parental involvement are associated with inclusive strategies that respect the



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needs of families, addressing the barriers to involvement such as childcare, transportation, scheduling and conflicts resolutions. According to Henderson and Mapp (2002), as well as Goldberg (2007), parental involvement programmes benefit all the role players in education as a system, for example, learners, teachers, schools, parents and communities as a whole.

### 2.8.1 Advantages for learners

According to Squelch and Lemmer (1994) the benefits of parent involvement include improved school performance, reduced dropout rates, a decrease in delinquency and a more positive attitude towards the school on the side of learners. Lemmer (2007) further finds that a good school, family and community partnerships lead to improved academic achievement, self-esteem, school attendance and better social behaviour. According to Lemmer (2007), parents and teachers experience mutual support and satisfaction in achieving positive changes in children and the school.

Before Lemmer (2007), Epstein (2006) found that students whose parents and teachers use frequent parent involvement practices, showed a more positive attitude towards school. In addition, Epstein (2006) indicates that more regular homework habits, greater concurrence between the school and family practices, more familiarity between teachers and parents and more homework completed on weekends improves all learners' performance. Lemmer (2007) and Epstein (2006)'s statements support Katz and Bauch's (1999) findings that researchers on parents involvement conclude that children whose parents are always involved in school related matters find their children "earning higher marks than children of similar aptitude and background whose parents are not involved" (Katz and Bauch, 1999:14). According to White-Clark and Decker (1996), the benefits of parents' involvement in the education of their children includes that learners develop a



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more positive attitude to all school activities and in addition scores higher achievement in reading. White-Clark and Dekker (1996) close by mentioning that better commitment of parents in their children's educational activities lead to such children to perform well in their homework and assignments and a greater consistency between the family and school goals is created.

### 2.8.2 Advantages of parents partnership with teachers and schools

An increase in parent and community participation benefits schools as teachers' workload can then become manageable; supportive parents develop positive attitudes towards the educators which inversely prove to be beneficial on the side of the school in totality (Davies, 1993). The advantages of parents involvement for the school is that parents can be used as a powerful force of change at school, like serving as a political asset when they argue for the interest of children and schools at board meetings or legislative sessions (Booth & Dun, 1996).

The advantages of parents involvement for teachers and the school includes that the interaction can play a significant role in improving school programmes and climate (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004). Furthermore, Lemmer & Van Wyk (2004) mention that parents' involvement in educational matters of their children provides family service and support to the school. To support Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004), Epstein (2006) mentions that parents' involvement improves relationships and contacts between the home and the school and in addition parent-school interaction improve the relationship among parents, teachers and the school. Teachers' knowledge of the child's home situation which can influence such child's education is improved through active parental involvement and it positively increases commitment to teaching by the teacher, thus reducing the teacher's workload (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004, Epstein, 2006).



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According to White-Clark and Decker (1996) teachers reap the advantages of parents' involvement through training around how to work effectively with families from diverse backgrounds. Based on this benefit, support from the principal for their efforts to work with families is highly required. Tapping the knowledge, skills, and resources of colleagues, maximising limited resources and time through the cooperative development of grade-level homework and home learning activities should be encouraged (Berger, 1991). Following Berger (1991) and White-Clark and Decker (1996), a stronger parental involvement creates a better understanding of parent expectations and closer communication with both parents amongst themselves, and the educators. An increased rate of return on homework and greater family involvement in home learning activities and increased parental support and cooperation can further be realised as a benefit for the school.

### 2.8.3 Advantages for parents

Davies (1993) in a study of the benefits and barriers to parents' involvement states that the benefits for parents in being involved with the schools include greater appreciation of their important roles, strengthened social networks, access to information and materials, personal efficiency and the motivation to continue with their own education. Van Wyk (2004) asserts that when parents understand the problems of their children at school, such parents get to a position of working with the school in resolving the problems, as well as getting further insights for resolving other school-related matters.

Family involvement efforts are most successful when educators and schools assume that all parents/guardians or care-givers of children at schools want what is best for their children and can make important contributions to their children's education. In essence, educators need to understand both the benefits and barriers to family involvement. Through understanding the benefits of parents in the involvement process, educators shall become clear in terms of preparations and



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will therefore include knowledge and skills to create positive attitudes towards involving and empowering parents (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997).

Through a parents' empowerment approach, whereby parents are given more room to express themselves in the educational matters of their children, the disenfranchised families are strengthened to take part in school activities (Shartrand et al., 1997 & Van Wyk, 2004). The empowerment approach is based on the belief that schools are key institutions in local communities and thus are in a special position to enhance or retard learning development of children. Epstein (1996) mentions that the ways schools care about children are reflected in the way schools care about their children's families. On top of that, if educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school, which will be detrimental in terms of school-family-community benefits (Epstein, 1995; Shartrand et al., 1997 & Van Wyk, 2004).

White-Clark and Decker (1996) indicate that parents obtain an opportunity to become partners with teachers and to shape important decisions that enhance children's chances for success in school through their involvement. Parents gain consistent expectations, practices, and messages about their children's homework and home learning activities no matter how rich or poor they are. In addition, parents further gain an understanding of the pedagogical challenges their children face (Cole, 2010). In conclusion, White-Clark and Decker (1996) and Cole's(2010) opinions infer that parents involvement creates increased opportunities to engage in home-learning activities with children and an access to school's wide resources such as parent learning centers, homework hotlines, homework centers, parent workshops and home visits. Parents can be used as a powerful force of change at schools, for example, they can be political assets when they argue for the interest of the children and school board meetings or in legislative sessions (Swap, 1993). Besides being political assets of the school, an increased parent and community



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participation benefits the school as teachers' workload can be made more manageable.

### 2.8.4 Advantages for the community

Community involvement of parents in their local schools is vital for attaining the ideal of effectiveness of the school, therefore it should be encouraged that communities contribute to local schools through monetary and voluntary participation (Lockhead & Levin, 1993; Davies, 1993). Epstein (1996) mentions that when parents, teachers, students and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins to work. In addition, Epstein (1996) indicates that an increased link between the school and communities have proved to have multiple positive results like increased access to schools and facilities, cost saving and improved services through community collaboration with schools, increased community participation in school activities which on the other hand contribute to advancing the prospects of a more democratic and equitable society (Lockhead& Levin, 1993, Davies, 1993). Booth and Dunn (1996) mention that schools need to encourage the parents to broaden their spheres of activities so that parents become catalysts for change in the school and the community and informed advocates for their children.

Community settings such as a home, church, agencies, youth clubs, health centers, libraries and civic clubs can be helpful in involving parents (Swap, 1993). To Swap (1993), there may be times when parents are uneasy, unwilling or unable to be involved at school but are still interested in the education of their children. There are also times when parents and children can be best served through the collaborative effort of persons and services from several institutions in the community. In short, school personnel, parents and children can benefit from these resources without having them located at the school (Swap, 1993).

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An idea that would support Swap (1993), on the advantages of parent involvement to the community, is offered by Murphy (2002), who writes that when health centers conduct discussions or workshops on issues such as drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, disaster preparedness, students and parents can benefit. In addition, Murphy (2002), indicates that schools that do not have facilities such as sport grounds can equally benefit from making use of the communities' playing fields, community centers can be used to accommodate parents-teachers meetings and conferences, family night and homework centers.

Many community agencies and businesses also contribute financial and human resources in the form of knowledge and skills to schools, the school should also give back to the community by offering needed services such as the use of school hall for community meetings or use of school furniture through proper channels during bereavement times (Murphy, 2002). Furthermore, Murphy (2002), asserts that parents and students should be taught to volunteer their services to help others build the community. The end result of parent involvement is for all stakeholders to be involved, to contribute and benefit from the partnership that promotes the academic and social growth of children (Murphy, 2002). To Murphy (2002), schools that are successful are characterised by being located in good progressive communities and in turn, the communities flourish when their citizens succeed.

Vincent (1996) indicates that parental 'voice' in the state education systems was in the past a rare phenomenon which was only felt during annual parents meetings. Of late, parents' contribution by way of getting involved in the education of children is not only highly desired for, but has been found to be beneficial in the education of children (Vincent, 1996). Parents' involvement also benefits all the stakeholders that are involved in education; that is learners, teachers, businesses and the community at large and have to work on a mutual participatory approach (Vincent, 1996; Murphy, 2002).



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## 2.9 MODELS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Keith (2011) indicates that when some parents hear that they need to be more involved in their child's school, the first reaction is sometimes a sense of guilt that they aren't more active enough in the local Parents-Teacher Organisation (PTO). The statement refers to disadvantaged parents because Keith (2011), goes on to mention that parents who are involved in their children's school activities are parents with higher educational attainment. Arguably, not all parents in disadvantaged families are reluctant to get involved in school related matters of their children. Although Keith (2011) mentions that parents who are actively involved in the school also have reliable sources of income and attends school conferences, volunteer at schools, and are supporting school events to enrich their children's learning achievement. Like the Michigan Department of Education (2010), Keith (2011) indicates that parents who are actively involved with school activities, are further motivated to invest more time and energy into the local parent group, and ultimately reap the benefits of that particular level of involvement in their child's education.

The following paragraph describes the types of parents involvement as provided by the Michigan Department of Education (2010), followed by Epstein's (2010) model types of parents' involvement as follows.



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### 2.9.1 The Michigan Department of Education s perspectives

The Michigan Department of Education (2010), as a preliminary type of parental involvement types, state that the most valuable way one can become involved in one's education for one's child, is to provide a rich learning environment at home as a support for the child's academic achievement. Although the Michigan Department of Education (2010) was referring to an American disadvantaged rural atmosphere, to a certain extent, the types of parental involvement described can be similar to those of South African rural communities. For example, establishing a daily educational family routine like providing time and creating a quiet study place. In addition, assigning the responsibility for household chores carefully to children that they do not disturb school work, and being firm about bedtime and having dinner together. Families further monitor out-of-school activities like setting limits on TV watching. They also ensure that an adult take care of the school children when parents are not home, and arranging for after-school activities and supervised care.

To the Michigan Education Department (2010), families with children who succeed at school are self-disciplined. The children are hard workers and model the value of learning, for example, they communicate through questioning and conversation. Furthermore, The Michigan Education Department (2010) asserts that children are trained to demonstrate that achievement comes from hard work. The families, despite having low socioeconomic status, also express high but realistic expectations for achievement. Parents, care-givers or guardians set goals and standards that are appropriate for children's age and maturity, recognizing and encouraging special talents, informing friends and other family members about success (Michigan Department of Education, 2010). According to the Michigan Department of Education (2010) most students at all levels (elementary, middle and high school) want their families to be more knowledgeable partners about schooling and are willing to take active roles in assisting communications between



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the home and the school. Parents who come to school regularly reinforce the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life.

### 2.9.2 Epstein's six types of parent involvement

Epstein (2010), from the Johns Hopkins University, has developed a framework of defining six different types of parents' involvement in schools. The framework assists educators at schools in rural communities to develop family partnerships programs. The main reason for creating a school, family, and community partnerships is, according to Epstein (2010), to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life.

Epstein (2010) claims that parents should create a home environment which will encourage support of their children as students. Parent education and other courses or training which promote the role that should be played by a parent in the education of their child are encouraged. The training will promote family literacy, which will subsequently lead to the development of family support programs that will focus on health, nutrition and other provisions of basic services such as shelter. According to Epstein (2010), home visits at transition point intervals from one educational phase to another should be encouraged, for example, when the child is moving from pre-school to elementary, elementary to middle, from middle to high school or from the General Education and Training band (GET) to the Further Education and Training (FET). In contrast, Davis (2000) indicates that families whose basic needs of food, clothing and shelter are not being met have a difficult time helping their children to do well in school, for this reason, schools and community agencies can work together to provide support that parents can focus on their children's needs. The benefits of helping families enhance their parenting skills includes the development of self-confidence and support, in which case, parents feel that the school is supporting them and they are confident that they are helping their children, parents send their children to



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school being ready to learn, and children are able to concentrate on school issues, without worrying about safety or basic needs (Davis, 2000).

According to this part of Epstein's (2010) parent involvement model, a design of effective forms of school-to-home communications about school programs and children's progress should be put in place. School conferences should be held at least once a year in which the participants must include the parents. Language translators to assist families should be needed since most of the parents, according to Epstein (2010), from rural communities are illiterate. To enhance the communication aspect, there should be further regular schedules of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters and any other forms of useful communications, although some care-givers might be illiterate to operate even a cellphone. In agreement with Epstein (2010), Davis (2000) earlier indicated that the more parents and teachers share pertinent information with each other about students, the better equipped they will be to help those students become successful, in addition, parents and teachers consultation and collaboration create the climate for maximum realisation of a student's potential. Furthermore, effective communication with families means that the school welcomes and consistently supports families to support their children in school related matters, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Following Epstein (2010), the benefits of improved communication probes parents feelings of being part of the school community. Parents will be kept aware of school events and other important school information. In addition, Epstein (2010) mentions that parents will gain clear information in terms of learning about the school's curriculum, assessments, achievement levels and reporting methods. Likewise, Davis (2000) mentions that parents will further obtain an understanding about the information needed from them to help their children thrive and achieve well at school. When schools and families share information and strategies, everyone feels connected to the school community and the school staff will realise



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the positive ways that parents contribute to student success (Davis, 2000). With regard to putting communication into practice, Davis (2000) further asserts that educators should devote more time on special staff meetings which is focused on the exploration of ways that can be adopted to improve communication.

Volunteering involves the recruitment and organisation of parents help and support. Although volunteering might not always be possible for destitute families because of job opportunities to gain some income, school and classroom volunteer programs should be open for everyone (Epstein, 2010). Volunteerism is an effort which is designed to help teachers, administrators, students and other parents in the educational process of children, particularly in rural communities. Parents' room or family centre for volunteer work, meetings and resources for families should be put in place. An annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times and allocations of volunteers should be transparent (Epstein, 2010). Davis (2000) states that through volunteerism practice, teachers will find more time to work individually with learners, very often, when teachers have assistance in the classrooms, they find more time to work one-on-one with students, volunteerism creates a welcoming environment which lays the groundwork for positive relationships and on top of that, schools raise awareness of how much their help is needed and appreciated, volunteer opportunities can lead to paid positions or increased knowledge that can be used in the workplace.

Learning at home: this is the type of parent involvement which is based on home learning activities, it encourages parents initiated activities or children-initiated activities, however, educators should provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with home works and other curriculum related activities, decisions and planning (Epstein, 2010). According to Epstein (2010), information for families on skills required for students in each grade, homework policies and how to monitor these home works, family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work, should also be



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provided. Davis (2000) indicates that families can make a huge impact on how successful their children are with schoolwork, yet schools don't often know what is happening at home. Schools need to invest time and put more effort on influencing learning-at-home routines.

Davis (2000) further relates the challenges which teachers have to take heed of when putting the strategies to involve parents in place, and mentions that parents are often unaware of the teachers' and the schools' expectations of students, most schools generally have not developed strategies to involve parents in curriculum-related decisions. At the same time, Davis (2000) indicate that learning at home will enhance parents' understanding of the materials that their children are responsible for knowing, parents can assist their children with the attainment of learning goals and develop the all important positive attitude about homework..

Epstein (2010) indicates that parents should be included in schools decisions, in developing parent leaders such as School Governing Bodies (SGB). In addition, parents should be active in activities that involve Parents Teachers Association (PTA) at local levels or Parents Teachers Organisation (PTO) at regional levels. Following decision-making aspect of parent involvement, Epstein (2010) contends that parents should not merely be part of the process, but should be actively involved in, for example, advisory councils, and committees for parents' leadership or parents' participation. Parents are encouraged to form independent advocacy groups which are directed towards school reform and improvements, a network to link all families with parent representatives should be in place.

Davis (2000) also advances that schools benefit when they include parents in the decision making process, when parents provide their opinions and preferences regarding issues under consideration, they are more likely to buy-in to school policies and initiatives. In addition, Davis (2000) asserts that when parents are aware of the complexities of running a school, they are often more supportive and



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can help the school reach out to other parents, share ideas and greater input because they have informal access through extra-curricular activities and neighbourhood connections. Amongst other things, Davis (2000) and Epstein (2010) identify the benefits of shared decision-making when parents are supportive, involved in leadership and decision making roles.

Epstein's (2010) parent involvement theory encourages teachers to persuade parents to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development (Epstein, 2010). Furthermore, he asserts that information regarding students, families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support and other programs should be in place. Information regarding community activities that has a link with learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students should also be in place (Epstein, 2010). Based on parents working in collaboration with the community, the resources used will strengthen schools, families and student learning (Davis, 2000).

Davis (2000) indicates that schools that are exposed to improved community collaborations feel they are getting help from multiple sources with the support of communities, no matter how developed that particular community is, community partners can be able to offer varied mentoring experiences to students if schools open the doors of collaboration to them and community businesses benefit from the positive public relations of working closely with schools. Davis (2000) indicates that to promote collaboration between the communities and the schools, care should be taken to ensure that child-family educational services are integrated first, communication within the community should be improved, child and family services with regard to education should be integrated and clear policies about the importance of confidentiality should be established.



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Epstein's (2010) six types of parent involvement is criticised in that they may not always be applicable in all disadvantaged communities. For example, Jennifer and Neo (2000), indicate challenges to the Epstein's theoretical practices by mentioning that some teachers and parents have a different attitude beside the one that takes the partnership of schools, families, and communities to a next level of children's educational development. The need for independence is also highlighted and teachers are found to be indicating parents' permissiveness, meaning that parents just accept and leave everything in the hands of teachers. Parents on the other hand mention the issue of lack of discipline and limited expectations at schools (Jennifer & Neo, 2000). The following paragraph describes steps that can be adopted to overcome Epstein's (2010) model of parent involvement.

### 2.9.3 Measures to overcome the challenges of implementing the six model types of parents' involvement

Epstein and Sheldon (2006) suggest that to improve parenting in relation to children's education, parents need to be trained in various ways to read aloud with their children at home. Although Epstein et al. (2002) focused more on elementary levels of education, the statement can be applicable even in secondary schools found in rural communities, since it has been found that most of the learners at secondary level are still unable to read and write well.

According to Epstein et al. (2002), communication can be enhanced through conferences in which all stakeholders are part of the meeting which may also improve the reading goals of children. Weekly interactive reading homework activities for all students to read allowed for a certain family partner is also encouraged. Parents Teacher Associations (PTA or PTA) should support parent centres to provide information regarding the children's improvement on the level of the child's development. To collaborate with the community, both parents and



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schools should seek for donations from business partners for classrooms, for the library and also for children to take home (Epstein et al., 2002).

### 2.9.4 Overlapping spheres of influence

On top of Epstein (2010)'s theoretical types of parental involvement, she earlier identified the overlapping spheres of influence which are also of utmost importance. Epstein (1996) indicates that the schools, families and communities directly affect student learning and development. On this note, Epstein (1996) alludes that schools, families and communities should work together to meet the needs of children. According to Epstein (1996), overlapping spheres of influence could be illustrated in daily interactions between teachers, students and parents. Under better situational periods, some parents revealed that they ensured that their daughters finish homework first, before doing other home chores, this facilitates the fact that students in some cases receive consistent messages about the importance of schools as it links to their families and home life and vice versa (Epstein, 1996 & Epstein, 2010).

According to Epstein (1996), overlapping spheres of influence produce 'family–like schools' and 'school-like families'. Family-like schools are characterised by an accepting, caring atmosphere and a warm welcoming trait. The schools take into account the realities of family life and are equitable for all families, and not just a few. The schools are further able to recognise each child's individuality and special traits. Similarly, school-like-families emphasise the importance of school, homework and learning activities. To extend this idea, Epstein (1996) further suggests that the language used by a school to identify students, families, and educators should take on a 'family' concept, for example, rather than using the word 'students', schools should use 'children' because it suggests an extension of the family. Sanders and Epstein (1998) indicate that the overlapping spheres of influence can be affected by either external or internal factors operating within



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the school, these factors include individual beliefs, experiences, family practices, type of schools, and nature of communities. The internal structure of influence delineates where and how interactions occur within and across school, home and community contexts (Sanders & Epstein, 1998).

### 2.9.5 Moving forward: ideas for research on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

If family involvement is an important premise for learners success in rural communities, then such involvement must be addressed harder, although the questions arises, "how can more families, indeed all families become involved in the education of their children in ways that contribute to student success?" (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). In this version of moving forward, Epstein and Sheldon (2006) indicate that school, family and community partnerships are a better term than parental involvement. To Epstein and Sheldon (2006) the partnerships formed by coalition of schools, parents and community recognises that parents, educators and other stakeholders in the community share the responsibility for students' learning and development. Furthermore, Epstein and Sheldon (2006) assert that school, family and community partnership is multidimensional and within it there are various types of parents involvement that are inborn and emerges with its strengths and weaknesses in each case.

Like Wherry (1997), Epstein and Sheldon (2006) contend that a program of school, family, and community partnerships is an essential component of school and classroom organisation, On this note, studies need to include measures of schools' actions to implement partnership programs and activities that reach out to involve all parents, not only parents' self-initiated actions. Programs of school, family, and community require multi-level leadership in which case districts and circuit offices having leadership roles to play in guiding schools to strengthen and sustain programs of family and community involvement, regardless of socio-economic



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status of the area the schools serve. Epstein and Sheldon (2006) concur with Wherry (1997) on the idea that programs of school, family, and community partnerships must include a focus on increasing student learning and development, whereby plans for partnerships are linked to school goals for student success. All programs of school, family and community partnerships should be based on equitable practices.

The relationship of schools, families and communities is a diverse one which if properly exercised, will commonly be followed by increased respect for families by teachers (Epstein et al., 2002). In addition, Epstein et al. (2002) indicate that teachers' relationship with families and communities strengthens all the efforts for learners to succeed beside their poor socio-economic and cultural background. Such relationship further leads to greater readiness in terms of family involvement, and increased satisfaction with family involvement and support (Epstein et al., 2002). Joseph (2010) points out that in the implementation process of parents' involvement, challenges are usually not absent. Amongst the identified challenges are lack of consistent leadership within and across schools, lack of quality teaching in terms of instructional preparations and delivery, low levels of both parents and community involvement stakeholders.

## 2.10 PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT APPROACHES TO BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In this section I provide a review of literature on the different approaches that have previously been studied by other scholars, building upon them in a way to find a better approach that can encourage parents' involvement in education of the children, which has been overwhelmingly welcomed by many researchers to improve academic performance of learners at school. Although the socioeconomic status of The United States' rural communities might be different from the South African context, similarities remains that when similar approaches are applied to encourage parental involvement, they are applicable worldwide. The United States



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based organisation, Parents Reaching Out (2008) describes parental involvement approaches for learners' success at schools in terms of the manner in which families should get involved, the manner in which communities should get involved, and the manner in which schools and communities should get families involved in the journey of the child's learning process.

### 2.10.1 Family involvement in schools

Similar to the South African context, the United States Parents Reaching out Organisation (2008), in collaboration with the United States Department of Education, suggests that parents can work together with their schools to promote effective programs and policies. The effective programs can be realised by sharing ideas and constructive solutions to issues that assist children to read and write and ultimately developing a strong parents components for a better school program. Furthermore, Parents Reaching out Organisation (2008), mentions that parents can join hands in developing high standards for all students by volunteering to participate on a curriculum committee to provide a parents' perspective on the school's curriculum.

Parents Reaching out Organisation (2008) indicate that parents can involve themselves with their schools through a variety of activities, for example, joining the school's Parent Teacher Organisation (PTO), Parents Teacher Association (PTA) or Parents Teacher Clubs (PTC), coincidentally, the presentations provided by the United States Organisation of Parents Reaching out are similar to the activities that should be practiced in Epstein's (2010) model of parental involvement, parents can offer themselves to serve in the Educational Plan for Student Success Team (EPSS), local IDEA advisory, Action Team and other school committees. Parents are encouraged to attend Parent Teacher Conferences (PTC) on a regular basis and to read all communications sent home from school, such as a newsletter, or letters from teachers.



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In addition, Parents Reaching out Organisation (2008) mentions that parents should further work with school personnel for their children's academic success in terms of building their confidence and they should create a positive reinforcement to build up the child's motivation. Parents should emphasise negative reinforcement on issues that might distract the process of better academic achievement such as drugs and alcohol abuse. More importantly, parents should check their children's homework for quality, sign and return report cards to the school (Epstein et al., 2002).

### 2.10.2 Family involvement in their communities

Parents' Reaching out Organisation (2008) presents several case studies of parents in New Mexico, who devotes much of their time to attend school related matters before TV time on their children. The practice has become a norm for every family house hold in the community that even difficult skills, becomes easy as the families in the communities share. Beside the Organisation's presentation, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2004) indicate that parents in South Africa should organise parents education classes, annual general meetings or school orientation programmes for new parents of specific grades whereby teachers address the parents *en masse.* On occasions like that parents are also given a share of the podium in which case they will be able to raise issues which concern effective learning and teaching. On the contrary, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2004) mention that while most schools can hold regular meetings with the parents in various communities, possibilities for poor performance in those schools still remain, this was after their studies on parental involvement in selected schools around Gauteng. However, the recommendation that is provided by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2004) is that parents should continue to attend schools meetings and provided transport where necessary to attract as many parents as possible to a participative meeting.



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### 2.10.3 Families, communities and schools partnerships

Following the Organisation Parents Reaching Out (2008), successful models of family involvement honour families by validating any level of involvement or contribution they make. Families are acknowledged as assets to the group and they are worth of being fitted in the systems like schools. There should be early intervention programmes, health care and other educational social spheres. The created educational social spheres will enhance to build support leading to basic qualities such as usefulness, sense of belonging and competence (Parents Reaching Out, 2008).

According to the Parents Reaching Out Organisation (2008), many school districts in New Mexico also have adopted the application of Epstein's (2010) model of parental involvement. The model which emphasises parental involvement practices such as communications, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. Once more, Epstein's (2010) model is seen as an effort to get families involved in the communities and ultimately in the education of their children at schools. Furthermore, Parents Reaching Out (2008) contends that schools should take care that there is no 'one size fits all' answer to school-family and community partnership, instead, schools should set clear, measurable goals based on families and community inputs which they serve. Individual schools should provide a varied menu of opportunities for participation and ensure that all families and students have complete information about the standards students are expected to meet. While Van Wyk and Lemmer (2004) emphasise the point of working harder to get parents come to school meetings, Parents Reaching Out Organisation (2008) further conscientised schools to recognise communities' historic, ethnic, linguistic and cultural resources that can be useful to generate interest in family-community participation.



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## 2.11 SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, PARENTAL EDUCATION FACTORS AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

In this section the socio-cultural factors that affect parents in relation to their involvement in the education of their children are described. Many scholars wrote about parents' involvement in the education of their children as revealed in various literature databases, however, very little included the focus of poverty stricken families or parents and their engagement in the education of their children at secondary schools.

Entwistle and Alexander (1992) mentions that socio-cultural status and parent education level are closely associated, and the level of education is often used as an indicator of socioeconomic status. Watkins (1997) and Shaver and Walls (1998) thereafter mention that learners from poor families tend to achieve less well in their studies at secondary schools. Sitole (1993) and Overett and Donald (1998) indicate that parents from rural communities have been increasingly the focus of parental involvement programmes after findings that their status of being poor, is related to bad performance of their children at schools, and on top of that they are characterised by not taking part in Parent Teachers Associations (PTA) at schools. In addition, Overett and Donald (1998) indicate that some parents from rural communities cannot afford to get to meetings due to transport barriers. Some are further working for long hours and earning very little. Others feel intimidated that should they force to attend meetings, they might lose their poor hard-earned job opportunities. Parental involvement in education is beset with problems because it is influenced by a number of factors that include the parents social class, it can also be influenced by the socio-economic status (SES) of parents (Singh et al., 2004). Singh et al. (2004) go on to indicate that efforts to involve parents may be biased by giving further advantage by schools to wealthier parents while creating hindrances to the involvement of the working class group, the poverty stricken families in the community.



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In the United Kingdom (UK), Department of Education Skills (2010) programme, which focused on poor families involvement in education, findings on family literacy and numeracy demonstrations indicate that the number of parents who are actively involved in their children' schools increased significantly. By the end of the UK's skills development programme, more parents increased their contacts with their children's schools in various ways. For example, parents involved themselves in school activities and provided support in classes. Credit goes to the United Kingdom Education Department for realising that after the parental involvement programme, children whose parents showed high level of interest, regardless of their socio-cultural or economic status, had higher test scores and the scores for children whose parents showed little interest to the programme, had their achievement level deteriorating. The same idea was earlier found by Cotton and Wikulund (1989) on their study of schooling practices that matters most, and mentioned that there are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents regardless of their socio-cultural status.

Based on the complementary framework positions from literature that parents who are poor are likely to be passive participants in school related matters or not getting involved at all, Moore and Vandivere (2011) assert that events such as family structure, family functioning, family, work and child care, civic engagement, religion, youth development and social connections influence parents involvement in the education of their children as follows:

### 2.11.1 Family structure

Seltzer (2000) reveals that marital disruption can have negative implications on children's education. Furthermore, biological parents who are married or cohabiting has a positive influence on educational development of children at school. In contradiction, single-parent children are likely to underperform at school, due to possibilities of lack of parent involvement at school, since he or she



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is alone and committed on other matters to make a living at home. Seltzer (2000) adds that parents who remain together for many years of marriage or years of co-residence are more informative to their children than single parented families, or families headed by teenagers.

### 2.11.2 Family functioning

Moore and Vandivere (2011) stipulate that quality relationship and well-being of parents produces quality parents-child relationship. Such a good relationship paves way for children's better performance at school. In contrary, parents who are often fighting or having an unfriendly atmosphere of relationship are likely to cultivate a bad learning habit in their children at school. Moore and Vandivere (2011) continue to infer that from a life-course perspective, it is important that the aspects of family functioning be an ongoing process over time, for example, maintaining of monitoring children's not only school activities, but also social activities at home, and maintaining a positive parent-child relationships as children age represent important aspects of family functioning that are not 'one-shot' efforts but ongoing commitments.

### 2.11.3 Family, work and child care

Wu (1996), Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (1997), McLoyd (1998) and Moore et al. (2011) all agree that a secure employment provides an important base for family life, it is not only poverty which is associated with poorer children outcomes at schools, but so too is the consistency in terms of income in the family. For example, families with fluctuations of income have been associated with an out-of-wedlock childbearing, as well as with lowering reading and Maths achievement and higher behavioural problems among school children.



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### 2.11.4 Civic engagement

Moore and Vandivere (2011) indicate that attendance at signal moments such as graduations and pageants represents a different level of family or parents' involvement in the school. An ongoing attendance at parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings and volunteering in the classroom is not as worth as being engaged on special moments to (Moore & Vandivere, 2011). Regular meetings with teachers, continuous involvement in school keeps parents in touch with a central socialising institution in their children's life. It is a given fact that many families have a tendency of withdrawing their involvement during the adolescent years of their children. Such practices will if not controlled, hinder the properly done stronger academic ambitions and better school performance, regardless of disadvantaged community background. Moore and Vandivere (2011) go on to contend that even occasional involvement in community is good for the community. However, a sustained involvement has more potential to influence family processes and overall lifestyle. This implies that a sustained engagement in civic life and community activities is not just a positive community contribution to the community, but also represents a role model for good habits on children. The children will further internalise such good practices to permanently become theirs (Moore & Vandivere, 2011). At the same time, the value of sustained engagement outside the family might vary depending upon the level of activity and the age of children in the home, however, it is encouraged by much literature such as Griffiths and Hamilton (1984) that engagement should go on throughout the children's school ages, and even beyond adolescent stage.

### 2.11.5 Religion

Bridges and Moore (2002) allude that families that attend services or classes together, watch religious-oriented television or videos together, and engage together in activities sponsored by religious organisations over a period of years demonstrate an interest and commitment. Furthermore, Bridges and Moore (2002)



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indicate that togetherness in terms of religion in families reduces the chances of risky behaviour from the side of children. In addition, they infer that families living within a Christian atmosphere find their children improving their behaviour at school and ultimately drive them to do well in school activities, despite their socioeconomic status (Bridges & Moore, 2002).

### 2.11.6 Youth connections

Despite living under poor community conditions, parents are encouraged to persuade their children to consistently engage in positive activities during the secondary school years, in order to predict better outcomes throughout the children's schooling life (Zaff et al., 2003). To Zaff et al. (2003) many activities require an ongoing investment before proficiency is achieved, for example, playing musical instruments, singing, playing in a sport, debates and dance activities all require parental support, and ultimately brings a responsible citizen out of the child.

### 2.11.7 Social connections

Coleman (1988) indicates that a sound and sustainable neighbourhood relationship brings out a sense of mutual trust. This mutual trust improves over time, and can lead to fruitful participative interactions in educational development of children in the same neighbourhood. However, Coleman's (1988) idea is not without challenges, because many families find themselves situated in bad neighbourhoods, particularly in rural disadvantaged communities, where social connections become difficult (Mekos, no date).



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### 2.11.8 Economic perspective

The economic perspective of parents involvement in the education of their children has been described by French educational economists, Avvisati et al. (2010) as including a direct (*ceteris paribus*) effort made by parents to increase the educational outcomes of their children. It refers to the educational production function which makes parent involvement one of its arguments. Avvisati et al. (2010) broad perspective on family involvement from an economic point of view was earlier supported by the Harvard Family Research Project researchers, Bouffard and Weiss (2008) whose definition includes all activities made by parents that are intentionally linked to learning. Economists of education are primarily concerned with resources devoted to education and their returns, parental time is a quantitatively important input into the education production function, however it is known very little on the casual link between the levels of involvement and children's success educationally (Avvisati et al. 2010).

Economic scholars such as Patacchini and Zenou (2007) are merely interested in the economic determinants of parental involvement in education. They focus on parents' involvement as an intergenerational cultural transmission mechanism. According to Patacchini and Zenou (2007), parents decide their involvement effort in order to maximise their altruistic utility. Such utility includes the child's discounted probability of succeeding and parents can increase success probabilities through their own effort. Children's successes also depend on the quality of neighbourhood they find themselves in. The more parents invest in their children's education, the better the quality of the neighbourhood and the more the chances for the children in the neighbourhood to succeed (Patacchini and Zenou, 2007).



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## 2.12 CHALLENGES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IS SCHOOLS

The previous sections discussed the dimensions of parental involvement in the education of children from various perspectives. In this section I provide the possible challenges that can be experienced in an attempt to practice optimal parents' involvement in children's education. Without doubt, parents are essential for children's optimal performance at schools (Christenson, 2004). Literature such as the Parents Reaching Out (2008) organisation clearly documents that when parents are involved in their children's education, those children have higher grades and test scores, more positive attitudes toward school, lower dropout rates, and better attendance and also complete their homework more consistently regardless of their socio-economic status, ethnic, and level of education or even racial background (Henderson & Berla, 1995).

Arias and Morillo-Campbell, (2008) present the problems associated with parents' involvement as barriers to parental involvement. In this study I collectively refer to them as challenges that hinder or impede the involvement of parents in children's education. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) in their study of English Language Learners (ELL) and the involvement of their parents, found that schools with high ELL population face the challenge of communicating with parents, many of these parents have comparatively low levels of literacy that it is difficult to communicate with the even electronically, for example, through emails or cell phone short message texts – which they cannot read. In addition to being illiterate the parents cannot speak or read English, many of them have not completed a high school education and have little formal education.

To Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008), parents who cannot be reached by schools during times of need for their children's education are referred to as marginalised parents. Researchers describe 'marginalised' parents as those who are not involved at the same rate as the other parents who are regularly involved in their children's



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education. Overall, the challenges that schools face during the involvement of parents include school-based barriers on the side of parents, lack of English language proficiency, parental educational levels, disjunctures between school culture and home culture and other logistical issues. Shearer (2006) identifies lack of child care, inflexible work schedules, lack of income, lack of transportation to participate in school programs or events, lack of confidence interacting in a culture and/or language different from their own, parental shame of their own educational failure, lack of written literacy skills, insufficient information on home-school collaboration, different expectations of the school role, discomfort in higher- class settings and fear that they are not educated enough to be helpful in the classroom or to their own children. In addition, Shearer (2006) warns that the barriers might affect parents differently according to their personal, cultural backgrounds and characteristics.

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Following Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008), school-based barriers for parental involvement embrace unidirectional or unplanned approach by schools in terms of how to include parents in educational programmes. Examples given in this regard includes schools serving diverse populations in Arizona have been widely criticised for having a deficit view of English Language Learners parents and communities. In addition, Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) indicate that schools are also criticised for limiting their approaches to traditional efforts at parental involvement, which includes focusing on what parents can do to support the school or support academic achievement of their children rather than what the school can do to support families.

Caplan (2000) with regard to school-based barriers indicates that teachers may contribute to parents' lack of self-efficacy by mistakenly believing that parents with limited educational backgrounds have little to offer their children when it comes to supporting their education. Furthermore, Caplan (2000) mentions that



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viewing parents with little or no education as having a deficit limits the efforts teachers might expend in order to learn how poorly educated families can support education. In contrast, Caplan (2000) indicates that parents in poor situations are often staunch proponents of education, they strive to fight poverty and to get out of it by supporting their children academically by monitoring homework, talking to them about school and emphasising the importance of doing well in school.

Caplan's (2000) idea is also supported by Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) who further asserts that proponents of non-traditional parental involvement see parents contributing to school success in terms of informal activities. The activities mentioned include nurturing, instilling cultural values, talking with their children and sending them to school clean and rested. Both Caplan (2000) and Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) indicate that some parents have reported that an unwelcome school environment discourages them from getting involved. Moseman (2003) asserts that marginalised parents often experience confusion and frustration with an educational system that not only misunderstands their cultural values and beliefs, but places additional barriers that impede their full involvement of parents in their children's schooling. Similarly, immigrant parents who are often dealing with culture shock, see school as a completely foreign environment, which they then choose to avoid.

A number of special challenges that are often associated with rural life have been identified (Edwards & Knight, 1994; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999; Maynard & Howley, 1997; Wright & Stregelin, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006). These include isolation, poverty and lack of job opportunities, low achieving children, lack of knowledge about how each can use the other person more effectively, time constraint, lack of literacy skills and cultural mismatches or misunderstandings and discomfort, insufficient welcome to visit the school for events and activities. Lee et al. (2006) reveal that poverty limits parents' ability to provide for their children and to augment their children's



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education with available resources at home. Reduced financial resources limit families' abilities to provide educational materials and opportunities and may influence parents' educational expectations for their children. Lack of job opportunities makes it harder for rural learners to see any financial benefit to attendance or success in school. Furthermore, Wright and Stregelin (2003) indicate that parents' negative experience of schooling and low educational attainment may limit their ability to help their children with homework. Parents of children with low achievement are viewed as possessing less knowledge and skills to support their children and therefore encounter barriers to their involvement, in addition, they cultivate a negative attitude on their children by failing to attend school events (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Lee and Bowen (2006) further reveal that parents, particularly in rural communities have time constraints when it comes to participating in school related matters. In addition, Lee and Bowen (2006) indicate that some parents in rural communities are single and they are the breadwinners in their respective families. Being breadwinners, they are forced to find themselves in work related matters than schools. Maphanga (2006) indicates that parents in economically disadvantage families can face difficulties when attempting to participate in their children's education, especially those who are attached to low-wage jobs for they face dismissals if they take time off work to attend meetings and functions at school.

Shartrand et al. (1997) assert that parents in rural communities have different understanding of parents' involvement, in which case, some forms of parents' involvement may not be beneficial to the schools. To Shartrand et al. (1997), some parents have negative school experience and barriers, for example – some have little education and a negative school experience. Parents under such mentality are hard to draw into the system of their children's education (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999). In addition, Shartrand et al. (1997) indicate that other



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parents are uncertain about what actually need to be done in collaboration with the schools. Examples of uncertainty are evident when parents in rural communities seem to be unwilling to be involved in their children's education reason being just uncertain. On the other hand, lack of principals' facilitation to develop clear school policies which embraces the parents in the general running of school activities poses a barrier to parental involvement (Shartrand et al., 1997).

## 2.13 ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A welcoming school climate which promotes parental involvement includes a positive attitude of the school staff toward community, drawing attention to details that facilitate parental accessibility to the school, providing a physical space to accommodate parents and families, support and encourage personal contacts and communication (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). In addition, Dauber and Epstein (1993) contend that communication as a key to welcoming school climate can be promoted through the use of a home-school coordinator or liaison and through home visits by teachers which most probably support family relations to build up social networks between the school and the families (Arias et al., 2008).

To build up school-parental perceptions, the school should acknowledge parents cultural values, incorporate the community values in the curriculum and invite the extended family members to school activities (Arias and Morillo-Campbell, 2008). To add to this, Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) further indicate that schools should modify meetings to accommodate parents work schedule, provide child care to facilitate parental attendance at school functions and arrange transportation to facilitate parents' involvement in school activities.

Shearer (2006) suggests solutions that can encourage parents' involvement from different socio-economic backgrounds by way of describing teachers' barriers that needs to be checked such as lack of teacher time, meaning that teachers have to find time to engage parents on educational related matters of their children. On



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top of that, teachers should dispel fear of their own background, in cases where some of these teachers emanates from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teachers should further avoid fear of criticism, develop positive attitudes and institutional atmosphere conducive for inclusivity (Shearer, 2006).

In contrast to Shearer's (2006) suggestion to lure parents into the education system through teachers' efforts, Caplan (2000) mentions that teachers today are faced with additional workload. The workload is produced from high-stakes testing, progress monitoring assessments and documentations of learners' behaviour. Furthermore, Caplan (2000) indicates that interventions and accommodations, before and after-school hours being consumed by a lot of paperwork accumulated from previous days and planning for future lessons takes more time for teachers. Thus, the extent that contacts with parents in any way, either physically or through email, cell phone short message texts is seen as an interruption in a day already overflowing with too many tasks.

In the study of overcoming barriers to family involvement in low-income area schools, Moles (1999) suggests that schools can set aside time during the school day for teachers to meet with parents. The meeting either may be schedule to occur at school or at home. Some schools can also make use of technology to support school-home communication, for example, using telephone and voice mails or creating a homework hot line whereby parents and teachers will be able to communicate. However, the use of current technology remains a barrier to some families living rural communities. Moles (1999) go on to mention that schools, through the department of Education should provide transportation and child care services. It should also schedule events at convenient times and conduct home visits. Furthermore, Moles (1999) indicates that schools should find ways to help parents become involved in the school by way of supporting their children's learning at home.



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Following mixed perceptions of how parents may be included in the education of their children, other scholars have developed models which when applied, can suitably lead to effective learning of children at schools, despite having low socio-economic status or disadvantaged family members in the school. The following paragraphs describe Swap (1992), Gordon (1997) and Coleman's (1988) models of parental involvement.

### 2.13.1 Swap's school-to-home model

Following Swap's (1992) model of parents' involvement in schools, teachers should specify what parents should do to help their children at home. Parents should help their children's learning by endorsing the importance of schooling and making sure that their children meets the minimum academic and behavioural requirements. According to Swap (1992), it is hard to imagine an aspect of school reform that is more important, yet more neglected than strengthening the involvement of families and communities in the life of their school. In addition, it is impossible to imagine an excellent school that does not engage families and community members in a meaningful and productive ways. Parents are therefore expected to ascertain that their children complete homework every school day. They need to spend enough time with their children to transfer enough culture of learning to their children, for example, the way of being, knowing, writing, talking and thinking which characterise people who are successful within the dominant culture. Furthermore, Swap (1992) indicates that schools expect parents to meet teachers half-way in terms of teaching writing and reading skills. Riley (1994) refers to Swap's (1992) model as following the parents empowerment approach in that educators gives enough room for parents to either get involved or participate in the educational activities of their children at school and at home. The empowerment approach is based on the belief that schools are key institutions in local communities and thus are in a special position to enhance or retard the empowerment process of parents (Riley, 1994).



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In concurrence with Swap (1992), Gould (1993) contends that schools and families are complementary elements in their wider socialisation of children, the home, child and school form a tripartite that creates a special climate that is desirable for effective education. Parents' involvement therefore, is a relationship which allows both groups to use their abilities to the full, and to give children the best possible education that teachers and parents can (Gould, 1993).

Swap's (1992) model is not without limitations in that it further outlines that within rural communities, some parents may not be able enough to devote their time and energy to parent involvement activities. There is a possibility that the promise of equal opportunities through educational hard work could be false. It may be difficult to draw clear boundaries between the roles of school and home in formal education and there is a possibility of danger of demeaning the value of the child's culture in the effort to transmit the values and goals of the social mainstream. Based on Swap's (1992) model, it is imperative that teachers in the process of engaging parents in the education of their children should guard against Swap's (1992) outlined limitations.

### 2.13.2 Gordon's school impact model

Gordon (1977) indicates that most of the influence following the impact model goes from the home to the school. Following this model, parents are involved in the school as volunteers or parents' advisory committees, with a vision of changing the schools so that they are more responsive of the family-needs. Shartrand et al. (1997) refer to Gordon's (1977) theory as an inclusive setting whereby diversity is welcomed, thus the model is referred to as the cultural competence approach. The model has an assumption that if educators and other agency workers become more attuned to the home and its culture, then a better working relationship with parents will lead to greater effectiveness in educating learners. In addition, Gordon (1997) indicates that this model is defined as one which is based on teachers



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learning from parents and parents learning from teachers. To support Gordon (1977), Berger (1991) indicates that teachers and school administrators, or any other professional need to learn new attitudes towards parents, new skills in communication and group process and sharing. Gordon's (1977) model on parents' involvement in the education of their children at schools is one of the models which changes the way parents and professional educators see each other. The premise is that parents develop a more positive attitude to the school when they are involved in school activities either from a home or a school setting.

### 2.13.3 Coleman's theory of parent involvement

It is argued that in recent times various factors have led to the weakening of family structures and inability of the family to fulfill some of the tasks previously ascribed to it, for example, the socialisation of the child (Coleman, 1988). Based on the argument, an additional burden has been placed on the school to educate both content of various learning areas and the social-behavioural life outside the school. According to Coleman (1988), the home and the school provide different inputs for the socialisation processes of children, one group of inputs include opportunities, demands and rewards which comes from the school, while on the home side, inputs such as attitudes, efforts and self-conception are provided and for this reason, Coleman's (1988) model is referred to as the Social capital approach theory.

Following Coleman's (1988) theory, education comes from the reciprocal interaction between the qualities the child brings from the home and the qualities of the school. Thus, educators can learn from parents about child rearing practices and family skills and resources and tailor suggestions for involvement activities to meet the individual circumstances of each family (Shartrand, 1997). Earlier, Chrispeels (1992) indicated that socio-economic status alone cannot be as important as family values, attitudes, educational aspirations and cultural factors



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which influence family practices in regard to children's education and schooling, in addition poor families can be involved in practices that influence the learners' school success. On the other hand, Thompson (1992) asserts that poor people care just as much about their children as middle-income families, and are not stupid, if asked to become involved but not given any real decisions to make, poor people are not likely to become involved than one would under those circumstances.

Coleman (1988) adds that the social capital theory of the home is declining, evidence of which is displayed by the absence of parents from home as well as a decrease of exchange between parents and children about academic, social, economic and personal matters, and such circumstances, schools are obliged to play an even more significant role in children's life. Following Coleman's (1988) argument, Shartrand et al. (1997) suggest that educators should have a thorough knowledge of the social capital approach to promote parents to invest in their children's education.

In an attempt to summarise the redress of improper parent involvement in rural communities' secondary schools, Lynn (1997) indicates that schools can do so many things to encourage parent participation, teachers must be able to make good use of families, expertise and resources, at the same time reaching out to families to support them. The belief is that to succeed at building parent involvement, teachers need professional development experiences that prepare them for the task. Furthermore, teachers need preparation in subject matter and teaching skills (Keane, 2007). Keane (2007) found that the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) has some specific suggestions to help schools and home works together in a collaborative and competent approach to education. Such suggestions include creating a formal policy to help outline specific goals for parents and teachers working together. In addition, Keane (2007) identifies barriers specific to the school and its culture, assessing and evaluating improved current programs and involving the community at large. Mapp (1997) encourages



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schools to initiate schools family centers whereby parents would go to enjoy refreshments and educational conversations amongst themselves as a way of developing trustworthy relationships between the families and the school.

## 2.14 PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The previous sections reviewed literature on parent involvement in the education of their children from a global and generalised point of view. In this section I present the nature of parent involvement from a South African context. With the government having initiated inclusive education in South African schools, after 1994, it is evident that parental involvement will be of great necessity in the schools (Donald et al., 2002). Maphanga (2006) asserts that if mainstreaming is to work in developing social contexts as in South and Southern Africa, extra help and support may be required in the mainstream.

According to Donald et al. (2002), some parents may be willing to offer the help but not replacing the roles played by professional educators. The South African government has since introduced the concept of operation 'tirisano' which means working together among the African families. Through operation 'tirisano', parents, care-givers or guardians have to work closely with their children in terms of educational activities at home, whereas educators supplement the task at schools.

Working together has long been applied in South African families and community members, including at school levels, it came into being as a result of the spirit of 'ubuntu' which according to White-Clark and Dekker (1996) is a spiritual idea which directs the experiences of Africans and it embraces values such as humanness, reliability, honesty, courtesy, respect for authority and various other positive norms. Through the application of 'tirisano' and the spirit of 'ubuntu' in the South African schools, parents have also become part of the school as a system.



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Evidence of parents being part of the school as a system is prescribed in the regulatory framework of composing School Governing Bodies (SGB) and outlined in the South African Schools Act 84 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). It has been agreed by many scholars such as Epstein, Sanders and Sheldon (2006) that the relationship between the communities (rural communities being included) starts from the home, the family serves as the prime educators for children before they could be taken to schools.

### 2.14.1 Regulatory framework of the relationship of the school and communities

The White Paper on education and Training (2002) provides twenty-three values and principles that form a framework for a new system of education and training in South Africa. These values include, among other things, puts for a fact that parents, care-givers and guardians to have the primary responsibility for education of their children. It prescribes that education and training are basic human rights, and the state has an obligation to protect and advance these basic human rights. The prescribed human rights should include the right of the best possible educational opportunities (Mda & Mothata, 2000). Brynard (2007) in a study of home schooling as an open-learning educational challenge in South Africa found that despite current legislation which makes provision for collaboration between the public school sector and home schooling, it appears that much can still be done to move towards a closer partnership, hence this study was undertaken.

In an effort to involve parents in the education of their children, the South African government composed the South African Schools Act number 84 of (1996) which gives a room for parents to have more members serving on School Governing Bodies than the other role players. One of the functions of the SGB is to encourage parents, learners and members of the community to render voluntary services to the school, representatives that constitute the SGB are partners with different roles to play but contributing to effective partnership of schools and the community. Most parents in rural communities are unemployed and depend on a



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migratory labour system for income, for this reason the South African Schools Act 84 of (1996), Section 5(3) allow all learners to be admitted to schools even when they cannot pay or have not paid school fees. Through this compulsory education system parents have to a certain extent, been involved freely in the education of their children. The Department of Education White Paper (2002) empowers parents to have the primary responsibility for their children's education and the right to be consulted by the school on matters pertaining to their children's education. Such involvement initiative creates a feeling of ownership of schools to the parents. Earlier, Townsend (1989) criticised statutory parents' involvement by indicating that its limitations include parents' involvement being restricted to their voting rights with regard to the election of school's management council. Townsend (1989) further criticised the South African Schools Act 84 of (1996) by indicating that the statutory parent body cannot create the same opportunities for debate and research. To counter Townsend's (1989) criticism of forming statutory parents bodies which will serve in the best interest of schools. The Limpopo Province's Provincial Gazette (1995) argues that members of the School Governing Bodies should be subjected to courses and training programmes and school principals have to see to it that their School Governing Bodies are trained properly. Based on Limpopo Provincial Gazette (1995), today there are portfolio committees which functions to empower School Governing Bodies on the parents, schools and communities functionality at circuit level.

Mncube (2009) in a study of perceptions of parents on their role in the democratic governance of schools in South Africa found that parents at some rural schools are reluctant to participate in the decision-making processes. The reluctance is rooted on most School Governing Bodies having low educational level of power struggles in the SGB's. Furthermore, lack of parental involvement in former model C schools is attributed to the level of education of parents in general, fear of academic victimisation of their children, language barrier and difficulty in attending meetings in terms of transport to schools and back home.



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According to Sithole (1995), Mncube (2005) and Mncube (2008), school governance in South Africa includes the institutional structure entrusted with the responsibility or authority to formulate and adopt school policies. The policies that can be adopted embraces a wide range of issues such as school uniforms, school budgets and developmental priorities, endorsement of the code of conduct for learners, staff and parents, broad goals on the educational quality that the school should strive to achieve, school community relations and curriculum programme. School governance structures create an opportunity for all stakeholders – parents, business people and community members – to develop a sense of ownership of the school and thus, take responsibility for what is happening at the school (Sithole, 1995; Mncube, 2005 & Mncube, 2008). The development of democracy in South Africa provides way for an increased emphasis place on parental and community involvement in and control over the schools. Parental involvement needs to go beyond participation in the school governing bodies and in educator meetings.

### 2.14.2 Parents' involvement for success of their children against poverty

In South Africa, as in most parts of the developing world, rural communities constitute particular challenges in providing effective education, people in acute poverty have to live below the 'poverty datum line' of a daily food intake of 2000 calories, and yet still strive to take the children to schools (Kamper & Mampuru, 2007). Poor learners and poor schools are principally and constitutionally entitled to the provision of quality education and resources, to achieve that, Kamper and Mampuru (2007) emphasised that the involvement of all stakeholders at the school is outstandingly the source of success for poor learners.

The principal should always operate an open-door policy for all parents, business people, community members and other stakeholders who share the interest of children's education within the rural community (National Commission on Education, 1996). Kamper (2008) in a study of a profile of effective leadership in



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some high-poverty schools indicates that the best mechanism for success is to know the barriers first, followed by the implementation of strategies to overcome the challenges. In the process, Kamper (2008) relates that the true impact of poverty on the provision of education is evident from learners, teachers, parents and environmental conditions that principals of schools in high-poverty areas typically confront. The learners from high-poverty rural communities often come to school being hungry, sometimes being ill and without proper clothing, lack study facilities, parental support, motivation, self-esteem and language proficiency and move frequently from one school to another (Cole-Henderson, 2000; Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2002).

Both Cole-Henderson (2000) and Acker-Hocevar and Touchton (2002) assert that most teachers in rural communities' secondary schools are beginners. This follows after the most experienced teachers outdrain to search for better opportunities outside poverty stricken areas. Acker-Hocevar and Touchton (2002) add that other teachers are under-qualified and for that reason, they have low self-esteem, low work motivation and low learner expectations, they show lack of respect for learners and their parents, practice 'drill and kill teaching' ('poverty pedagogics'), often work in rundown classrooms, and have to cope without proper tuition resources.

In an effort to overcome high-poverty setbacks, and besides but not disregarding parents involvement, Kamper (2008) outlines that there needs to be a new inclination among the privileged. Through 'inclination' as referred to by Kamper (2008), the privileged community members have to narrow the gap between their wealth and the poor deliberately. All people have to live simply regardless of socio-economic status and the dignity of the poor as human beings have to be acknowledged. Kamper (2008) further go on to mention that both the wealthier and the poor should be optimally involved in decision-making processes regarding their children's future at schools. There should be total transformation of



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individuals with respect to their lives, which is characterised by co-operation between authorities at schools and all community members outside the particular community (Kamper, 2008). Through cooperation, the greatest potential and meaningful results in terms of personal relations and meaningful mutual trust shall be accomplished.

Mncube (2009) reveals that parents in South African schools are aware that their schools are democratically run. Parents have generally become extremely knowledgeable about their legal rights and responsibilities in schools. Furthermore, Mncube (2009) further mentions that most parents today understand that they have rights and responsibilities to carry out in schools and they have a right to ask schools how they are teaching the national curriculum. Above that, some parents, care-givers or guardians are aware that it is their duty to make sure that their children attend schools. In addition, Mncube (2009) indicates that the majority of South African parents appreciate the statutory position of putting them as members of school governing bodies.

## 2.15 Summary

It has been indicated in this study's preliminary review of literature that parents' involvement in the education of their children' education is an all-encompassing action and a specific type of work in education which is intrawoven and interwoven with certain contemporary and successive coherences. There are many factors which contribute to the debate of parents' involvement in the education of their children. Successful schools in rural communities do not just happen, but arise after a series of stakeholders hands-on activities to overcome several hurdles.

In this chapter, literature studies revealed various forms of parental involvement in rural communities' schools. If we are to promote high quality learning, parents of school children in rural communities should build on its current expertise and develop effective strategies for future improved socio-economic and parents'



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educational status and its impact on parental involvement, challenges that might hinder the involvement of parents in the education of their children were laid down, followed by possible strategies that can be taken to overcome them. The following sections of this study documents study's design and mixed-methodology.



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# CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, literature around the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools was discussed thematically. This chapter presents details of how the whole research process was conducted. A research design indicates the structure and procedures that are followed to answer research questions. This research study was conducted in a sequential process of two phases. Both research designs for quantitative approach (Phase 1) and qualitative approach (Phase 2) are documented separately but interrelated in this chapter.

The purpose of this study at Phase 1 was to examine the role parents in rural communities play in facilitating their children's quality education, and to investigate the contribution of parents in the rural communities on their children's access to secondary education. Phase 1 employed a quantitative research methodology centered on survey responses and statistical analysis.

The purpose of the research study in Phase 2 was to gain an in-depth understanding of parents in rural communities' attitudes towards becoming involved in the school activities of their children. Furthermore, the study sought to explore the possibilities of strengthening the chances of children from rural communities to enhance access to quality secondary education. In addition, the study intended to develop a model through which parents could apply in order to get involved in the education of their children.



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## 3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were investigated in this study:

- What role do parents in rural communities play in facilitating their children's education at secondary school?
- What contributions do parents in rural communities make with regard to their children's secondary schooling?
- What model can be developed to assure maximum parents involvement for quality education of their children at secondary schools?

## 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A mixed method research design can be described as a kind of research in which a researcher combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In order to conduct a mixed methods research, there is a need to collect, analyse, and interpret quantitative and qualitative data in one study, or a number of studies, where an investigation of the same phenomenon is under consideration. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 17), the logic of conducting a comprehensive study inquiry encompasses the use of "induction (or discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypotheses), and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding one's results)". A mixed method approach, therefore, presents a logical and intuitive appeal hence provides a platform for bridging the divide between qualitative and quantitative paradigms. This attribute, consequently, makes an increasing number of researchers to utilise mixed method designs in undertaking their studies (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).



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A mixed method research design combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. On their own, quantitative and qualitative methods have some strength, but more benefits are realised when they are brought together. The strength of a mixed method research design is supported by Connelly (2009: 31), who indicates that "the goal of mixed methods research is to draw on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both types of research". Fundamentally, it is important that the researcher be able to choose a research design that would better address the research questions posed. If the realisation is that mixing methods is the right choice, then there should be no restrictions as to the use of research instruments, which draw on the desirable attributes of different research designs. Connelly (2009) also asserts that a mixed method design is appropriate since it is based on a pragmatic philosophy that states that a researcher ought to use an approach or combination of approaches, which would appropriately address research questions.

Quantitative research, often, improves on the validity of research instruments as well as the provision of a numerical dimension to analysis when addressing phenomena (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In addition, quantitative studies can simplify human experience, statistically, making the analysis of research findings easier. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, take into account the lived experiences hence enabling contextualisation of the analysis of phenomena and, they allow for an in-depth understanding of phenomenon since they are often structured to collect data over an extended period of time (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Some research studies are not definite in prescribing whether a quantitative or a qualitative approach is required because the study might require desirable attributes from both approaches. This could, therefore, provide a reason for employing a mixed method approach in order to harness the power of both



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methods. However, Yin (2006), argues that mixed method research does not necessarily have to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches all the time. There is a possibility of having a mixed method approach even in a case where two quantitative approaches have been exclusively used. Yin (2006), goes on to give an example of a study combining experimentation and surveys, which are both quantitative in design. It is indicated that mixing quantitative and qualitative research designs helps in enhancing internal and external validity, than either method used on its own. Equally, it is possible to mix a qualitative approach with another qualitative approach. Yin (2006) also indicates that depending on the objective, many distinct designs are a reality under a mixed method study. Yin (2006), also asserts that various types of mixed methods designs are possible, depending on the importance accorded the qualitative and quantitative portions.

A mixed method design also enables researchers to address a wide and a more defined range of research questions since they are not confined to one approach. And researchers can use one method to overcome weaknesses in another method and hence have stronger evidence for a conclusion (Yin, 2006). Using both qualitative and quantitative data in a study can, therefore, produce a more comprehensive understanding required to inform decision making. And, another desirable feature of a mixed method approach is that both qualitative and quantitative data can be collected at the same time (Yin, 2006). This, therefore, means that the data collection process does not necessarily have to be sequential, a process that could create delays in completing research assignments. In addition, mixed method research has other advantages, such as the use of narration to add meaning to numbers but also applying numbers to bring precision to narrative data (Yin, 2006). That is, researchers can generate theory through qualitative designs and then evaluate it quantitatively.

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Furthermore, a mixed method approach might be used for purposes of achieving triangulation, complimentarity, development, initiation and expansion (Rocco, Bliss et al., 2003). Triangulation is necessary in order to increase a study's validity and interpretability, while complimentarity increases a study's validity and interpretability by effectively managing overlapping, but different aspects of a phenomenon. Development, on the other hand, uses results from one method to develop the other method. To add depth and breadth to an inquiry, mixed methods uses initiation to deal with inconsistent results from qualitative and quantitative research findings. And, to extend the scope of the study an expansion approach comes in handy (Rocco et al., 2003).

Above all, a mixed method approach enriches studies in the sense that it promotes clarity, accuracy and meaning. This is as exemplified by the findings of a study conducted on women and meetings by Burdett (2000). In the final analysis, the underlying assumption is that research is more robust when it combines research paradigms in order to promote a fuller comprehension of human phenomena. Dialectical researchers accept that it is more ethical to mix methods so that plurality of interests, voices, and perspectives could be represented (Rocco et al., 2003). I have adopted the application of mixed methodology approach in this study so as to gain the plurality of interests from professional educators and parents.

In this study, I applied what Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2005) refer to as a fully mixed method sequential dominant status design. A quantitative approach was performed during Phase 1, subsequently followed by a qualitative approach in Phase 2. The sequence followed to make an inquiry moved beyond explanation and description during the quantitative first phase of the study, to a qualitative exploration and in-depth investigation for deeper understanding of the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in four case secondary schools during the second phase. The quest for understanding



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and in-depth inquiry is one of the aims of qualitative approach (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Guttmann & Hanson, 2003; Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Babbie & Mouton, 2009).

## 3.4 PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD INVESTIGATION

Written permission was sought and obtained from the Vhembe District office (see Annexures B and C) to conduct this study in secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit. I also obtained records of statistics containing the number of schools, educators and learners from all the secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit (see Annexure D). I requested permission from the chairpersons of the SGBs, through the principals of all the Malamulele East Secondary Schools, to conduct the study in their respective schools. All SGB chairpersons and treasurers granted me permission and signed the consent form (see Annexure F). The consent forms were written in English but I explained to them in discussion with participants, to which they all agreed and signed. I further requested for contact numbers of the SGB chairpersons and treasures to secure appointments. Principals assisted in introducing me to the SGB chairpersons and their treasurers in each of the four selected secondary schools.

## 3.5 PHASE 1 - QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology of a study denotes the value of selected measurement instruments and the reasoning behind the selection. Measurement instruments are techniques characterised by questions which are asked – in a survey questionnaire – to provide data relevant to the research questions (Punch, 2005). In this study, a survey questionnaire with closed-ended statements was used to collect data during the first phase. Also in this section, population of the study, sampling procedures, construction of the questionnaire, pilot application, distribution and collection processes are explicitly documented.



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### 3.5.1 Population

The population of this study were all parents from the 24 rural communities whose children were attending secondary school in one of the eleven secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province in South Africa. In the Malamulele East Circuit, there is a total of 5 837 children in the twenty-four villages who attend one of the eleven secondary schools. These children are taught by a total of 239 educators (see Annexure D for Population Statistics of the Malamulele East Circuit).

### 3.5.2 Sampling procedure

During the quantitative phase of the study, a simple probability random sampling method was applied to select a total of 170 educators from the 239 in the eleven secondary schools to complete the survey questionnaires. An alphabetical list of the 239 educators in the Malamulele East Circuit was drawn from which, the first eighty-five and the last eighty-five were selected for the sample. Random sampling allows anyone in the population to have an equal chance of being selected in the study, thus minimising biasness of the study's findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2009).

Schools that participated in this study were selected on the basis of being located in rural communities. The criteria was followed after previous studies such as Hamunyela (2008) revealed that there needs to be a further study in the rural areas and particularly among parents from low socio-economic status. I opted to focus the study on secondary schools after my personal observations as a secondary school educator, of the reluctance of parental involvement in the secondary school from which I am working.



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### 3.5.3 Development of the questionnaire

The content of this study's questionnaire for secondary school educators was developed after reviewing literature and other empirical studies (Neuman, 2006) on various factors that have an impact on parental involvement in the education of their children. Knowledge gained from the studied literature served as a guiding framework for the development of the measurement instrument. The approach was intended to determine whether certain generalisations about the involvement of parents found in other studies were also true for the practice of this study. The hypothesis made to guide the construction of this study's questionnaire was that there will be a correlation between the role played by individual parents in their children's secondary school education and the education which they obtain from the relationship. The study further hypothesised that there will be a correlation between the parents' contribution and the levels of success in terms of access to secondary education.

A questionnaire was then developed to collect data to be used to test the hypothesis empirically. The central concept of the study, which is parents' involvement, had been looked at to determine the suitable and appropriate method to measure the variable, which was the survey questionnaire. Measures for the extent of parental involvement were operationalised as statements made and weaved together in a smooth flow over the survey questionnaire.

Neuman's (2006), and Babbie and Mouton's (2009) recommendations guiding the construction and development of survey questionnaires such as avoiding contingency statements, using short items as possible and avoiding double-barreled statements were followed in the construction of this study's survey questionnaire. Section A contains four closed-ended items which sought for the biographical details from the respondents. Section B of the survey questionnaire contains definitions of constructs which was the body of the whole instrument.



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Within Section B of the survey questionnaire, the major themes are: the extent of parents in rural communities' assistance of their children in educational activities, parents' general attitude on educational matters of their children, parents' communication with teachers and their engagement in school governance activities towards improved academic performance of their children. Twenty-nine (29) closed-ended statements constitute Section B. In all the items, respondents responded by making a cross (X) over the box which applies to them and clear instructions to do this were provided.

### 3.5.4 Pre-testing the questionnaire

Small-scale pre-testing of survey questionnaires is recommended for feasibility, convenience and cost effectiveness (Harry et al., 2005; Punch, 2005; Janesick, 2000). The questionnaire for this study was piloted on six educators from the school where I am working. The people who participated in a pilot study were typical of the people from which the main study intended to collect data. After the respondents finished completing the prêt-testing process, they were asked to give their comments or constructive criticism on wording and sequence, redundancy, missing and confusing statements. These comments were invited to reveal errors in and validate the content clarity of the instrument, to improve format of the statements made and to refine the research instrument before the main investigation began (De Vos et al., 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The respondents did not suggest any change to the instrument. The results of the pre-testing session were not included in the main findings of the study, since the piloted school is located in a different circuit from the one under study.



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### 3.5.5 Application of the questionnaire

In this study, the self-constructed survey questionnaire was administered on educators to collect adequate, relevant quantitative data. Generally, quantitative data refers to empirical information provided by the teachers which were turned into assigned numeric codes. Numbers, indicating participants' responses were used to construct variable degrees of the respondents' sentiments. Results were expected to provide descriptive information which also shed light on the research questions.

Survey questionnaires were distributed to the schools on one day and collected the next day from all the eleven secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit. I personally delivered the survey questionnaires to the schools, discussed the purpose with the principals and appointed a research assistant solely for the distribution and collection within each of the eleven secondary schools. The questionnaires were returned easily to the school based research assistants. I phoned all the school-based research to confirm time of survey questionnaire collection and a 100% return rate of the survey questionnaires was achieved.

## 3.6 PHASE 2 - QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section I present the qualitative approach that was adopted to explore the extent to which parents in rural communities are involved in the education of their children in secondary schools. In this phase I was particularly interested in inquiring the contributions parents in rural communities make towards better performance of their children in secondary schools.



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### 3.6.1 Sampling procedure

It would have been impossible to include everybody in the study, thus, a sample had to be selected. Stanger (1998) indicates that sampling refers to the selection of people to participate in a research project, usually with the goal of being able to use these people to make inferences about a larger group of individuals. Best and Kahn (2003), add that the primary purpose of research is not only to discover principles that have universal application, but also to study part of the population in order to arrive at generalisations.

For this phase of the study, a non-probability sampling technique was applied to select four secondary schools within the eleven that were used as units of sample during the first phase of the study. A purposive judgemental sampling method was used to select four SGB chairpersons and four treasurers as some of the parents' components of the SGB. The logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). The understanding was that SGB members are according to the South African School's Act 84 of 1996, selected on the basis of having a child at a particular school to which they are elected. A total of eight SGB members (parents' component) were selected to participate in this phase of the study.

### 3.6.2 Qualitative data collection

For this study, an in-depth face-to-face interview was applied to obtain data from the participants. Qualitative data collection methods include an in-depth face-to-face interviews, open-ended interviews, direct observations and written documents. Data from interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions and knowledge. Harry et al. (2005), argue that researchers and participants at times misunderstand one another, therefore, to



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minimise this possibility, a two-way communication as the most basic form of human interaction was applied in this phase of the study. Henstrand (2005,) indicates that one-on-one interview method of collecting data prevents participants from being influenced by the perceptions and opinions of their colleagues, and the outcome would be a more valid account of their own experiences.

### 3.6.3 Interview guide

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), the interviewer enters the interview session with a plan to explore specific topics and to ask specific open-ended questions from the interviewee. Patton (2002) regards an interview guide as a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. Rubin and Babbie (1997) are of the opinion that an interview guide lists in outline form the topics and issues that the interviewer should cover in the interview but allows the interviewer to adapt the sequencing and wording of questions to each particular interview. Johnson and Christensen (2004), further maintain that the interviewer should be flexible and should not have to follow the questions that are in the interview guide line by line in any particular order.

The interviewer can even change the wording of any questions listed in the interview guide. To support Johnson and Christensen (2004), Rubin and Babbie (1997) indicate that the interview guide helps the interviewer to cover the same material and to keep focused on the same predetermined topics and issues while at the same time remaining conversational and free into unanticipated circumstances and responses. Patton (2002) outlines that an interview guide is of beneficial to the interviewer in that it ensures the interviewer to carefully decide how best to use the limited time in an interview session, it helps make interviewing across a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by determining in advance the issues to be explored, it is useful in conducting focus group



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interviews, though may equally be useful in face-to-face one-on-one interviews, in which case, the interviewer should be well acquainted with the questions in the interview guide.

In this study, a single question was properly prepared to probe all aspects related to parents' involvement in the education of their children in secondary over a face-to-face interview process on all the eight Phase 2 participants. However, the interview guide prepared did not dictate structure of the interviews and participants were allowed to raise issues and to expand on their answers related to parents' involvement.

### 3.6.4 Pre-testing

Pilot process is part of the preparations for a research study, and the quality of the preparation influences the quality of the research's final output. De Vos et al. (2005) indicate that designed measuring instruments for research studies should be tried out on a small number of persons having similar characteristics to those of the target group of respondents. For this study, the sole interview question was pre-tested on two SGB members, a chairperson and treasurer from the school where I work, a rural area centred secondary school. The purpose of the pilot study was to investigate the feasibility of the planned research project, to uncover any possible deficiencies in the measuring procedure (Huysamen, 1993). During this period, I found no misunderstanding from the research interview question which was: "Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children in the secondary schools". No modifications of any kind were made from question since it created a lengthy conversation which saw other secondary questions unfolding to probe more information from the participants.



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### 3.6.5 The interview process

As indicated earlier, the interview process was based on a face-to-face interaction with the participants. The following sub-paragraphs present the setting of the interview, how the interviews were conducted, probing, the research participants' behaviour during the interviews as well as the length of the interview sessions.

- **Setting for the interviews**

Since this Phase 2 of the study was placed over a qualitative approach, it was imperative for a proper preparation of the place where interviews took place. This was achieved with the assistance of school principals who secured a venue which was free from disturbances and noise. However, four of the selected participants were not available at their respective schools, and when contacted telephonically, an arrangement was made to have them interviewed at their homes, and again the environment was free from disturbances. De Vos et al. (2005), indicate that the researcher should ensure that there is comfort and free from threats when choosing the setting of the interviews. In addition, De Vos et al. (2005), indicate that the setting should be accessible to the participants.

The interviews were conducted on the 22nd and 23rd of August 2011. In the process, I ensured that the participants' other activities that they were doing are not disturbed by negotiating with them a convenient time that suited them. In the schools where interviews were conducted, I requested the principal to assist with a 'no disturbance' sign on the door of the room where the interview session was held. De Vos et al. (2005), encourage researchers to find a quiet setting where there will be no interruptions as possible.



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- **Procedures followed during the interviews**

Since the total number of research participants for this phase of the study was eight, I conducted the interviews personally. De Vos et al. (2005), refer to this procedure as an in-depth face-to-face (one-on-one) interview in which the researcher's interest is on understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make out of that experience. Neuman (2006), indicates that a one-on-one interview procedure provides the researcher with the chance to observe the respondents' behaviour and attitude in the form of non-verbal communication.

The use of open-ended interviews encouraged two-way communication, it confirms what is already known but also provides the reasons for the answers and often interviewees may easily discuss sensitive issues (De Vos et al., 2005). Another advantage of applying open-ended interview is that interviewers do not necessarily have to be skilled in the art of interviewing. While giving credit to the application of face-to-face (one-on-one) interview procedure, Neuman (2006), cautions that conducting interviews personally could be time consuming. Some participants might be unwilling to provide information on certain issues, while some could easily divert the interview by providing irrelevant information. In this study, I overcame such instances by guiding the participants, without rushing them, to the aims of the research as well as the issues under discussion.

In the beginning of the interview participants were informed about the nature and aims of the study. I assured them confidentiality of their contributions as provided on the consent form (Annexure F) which they signed on agreeing to participate. It was also indicated that only the participants will have access to the information and that the information will be used for dissertation writing and writing of articles for publications in a scientific accredited journals and the reading of papers at conferences only. All assurances made correspond with what De Vos et al. (2005) suggest; that after the researcher has introduced the subject of study, aims



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as well as the procedures to be followed should be clearly explained to the participants, and the researcher should confirm to the participants that the information will be treated confidentially. Such assurance was made with the participants

- **Recording the interviews**

After the introductory comments about the subject under investigation, I asked for permission to record the interviews from the research participants. A tape-recorder is a valuable tool during the interviews to improve the researcher's ability to recall the information collected during the interview (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). De Vos et al. (2005), indicate that the use of tape-recorder during interview aids the researcher to be able to focus on the process during the interviewing, thus observing the participants' reactions as well as their non-verbal communication. In this study, all the participants agreed that the interviews be recorded. I therefore used a digital Nokia N96 cellular phone to video-record all the proceedings during the interviews, the video clips were imported into my personal computer which made it easy for me to transcribe verbatim all the words that were mentioned by the participants. During the process, a simple interview schedule to serve as a guide to frame the interview was used. I also established a rapport with the participants before we started with interviews as a way of relieving any tension that they might develop.

- **Probing**

In this study, probing was applied in few cases primarily for the clarification of responses given by the participants. Probing involves follow-up questions to focus, expand, clarify or further explain the responses given by the research participants (De Vos et al., 2005). According to Babbie and Mouton (2009), probing enables the researcher to get the participants to answer in more detail and more accurately or at least provide a minimal acceptable answer. The meaning of follow-up questions is that it could be used when the respondent hesitates in answering or giving a



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vague or incomplete answer. Usually, probing questions in qualitative approaches are applicable when the answer provided does not provide enough information for the purpose of the study.

- **Language and duration of the interviews**

The interviews were conducted in the home language of the participants, Xitsonga. The language choice was a way of creating a free atmosphere for the participants to reveal their innermost ideas with regard to their involvement in the education of their children. On average, the interview sessions lasted for 19 minutes.

## 3.7 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND GENERALISABILITY

### 3.7.1 Validity

Neuman (2006), contends that validity and reliability are salient issues because constructs in social theory are often ambiguous, diffuse and not directly observable. LeCompte and Goetz (1982), maintain that while validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings, reliability is concerned with the replicability of the research findings. According to Hammersley (2000), validity is the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) maintain that in qualitative research studies, a primary focus with regard to validity is for researchers to capture authentically. Based on Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) and Hammersley (2000), one of the ways of establishing validity is to take one's findings back to the subjects being studied to verify data presented earlier. This is called respondent validation. For this study, findings were taken back to the principals, the SGB chairpersons and the treasurers as representatives of parents of the participating eleven secondary



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schools. This was meant for them to verify if what was captured was actually what they said. They all confirmed that data were captured accurately. The findings were also validated by the reviewed literature on the subject.

### 3.7.2 Reliability

During the transcription exercise, I decided to eliminate only those parts of the respondents' stories that were not commensurate with the research topic or had no significance to the research. Attempts were made to reproduce the interview scripts as accurately as possible. Following transcription, I listened repeatedly to the recordings while reading the transcript. Furthermore, the interviews were unbiased and I took care to ask leading questions to guard against moving out of the research objective. According to Best and Kahn (2003), a test is reliable to the extent that it measures whatever it is measuring consistently. On the other hand, Silverman, Kurtines, Ginsburg, Weems, Rabian & Serafini (1999), explains further and adds that reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. Neuman (2006), adds to his definition of reliability, the issue of dependability. Dependability of data for this study was established by capturing it on a tape-recorder while at the same time supplementing it by shorthand notes.

### 3.7.3 Generalisability

Williams (2000), refers to generalisability as the extent to which the results or findings of a study can be extrapolated to a wider context than that used in the implementation of research design. Williams (2000), indicates that generalisation in interpretive studies is not always possible, but can be overcome by the application of methodological pluralism since it is not only inevitable, but also desirable in research studies. This study adopted the application of methodological



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pluralism in order to realise the full potential of the method as it focussed on parents in rural communities' involvement in the education of their children. It specifically focussed in the parents found in the rural areas in the Malamulele East Circuit of the Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province in South Africa. Through the application of the same methodology adopted in this study in schools with similar characteristics as the delimitation of this study, similar findings might be found since the methodologies applied were geared towards transferability and free from biasness, and strived to provide the validity of generalisation.

## 3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Strydom (2002), involvement in research requires a general awareness and acknowledgement of appropriate and inappropriate conduct. The fact that research in the human sciences requires the researchers to use human beings as the objects of study means that the researcher should be bound by these conducts. The ethical principles that guided this study are discussed next, namely, informed consent, no deception of respondents, voluntary participation, non-malificence (doing no harm), no violation of privacy.

- **Informed consent**

In the preparation for this study I requested informed consent forms which were all signed by the research participants. I read and explained the informed consent forms to the participants first, before we engaged on the process of data collection. Research participation was entirely voluntarily and the participants were fully informed of the aims and the processes of the research. During the debriefing of informed consent, I established a rapport with the participants to create an environment which would be conducive and safe to disclosure. Neuman (2006), maintains that it is imperative for qualitative researchers to build a rapport with the participants to create a reciprocal trust.



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- **Voluntary participation**

For this study, the participants were unknown to me and during the debriefing process, I indicated to them that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that there would be no punishment on withdrawing from participation. Strydom (2002), highlights the fact that some participants may decide to participate in the research because they occupy subordinate positions to that of the researcher.

- **No deception of research participants**

Strydom (2002), mentions that some qualitative researchers give wrong information about the aims or goals of the research. This is mainly done when the researchers want to hide what the research participants will experience during the process of their participation. I informed the research participants that the research report would be available to them and that they would have access to it if they wanted to verify any aspect of the research. This was done to assure that there were no hidden agendas in the study.

- **Non-malificence to research participants**

During the research process, research participants could be exposed to emotional or physical harm at times (Strydom, 2002). In the social sciences this harm may be of an emotional nature. The onus rests on the researcher to therefore protect the research participants from any form of harm. This requires the researcher to cautiously inform the research participants, at the beginning of the process, of the possibilities of harm they may suffer as a result of their participation in the study. In this way, the researcher offers the participants an opportunity to make their decisions about participation or non-participation in the research. In this study, I promised the participants that any form of getting harmed by taking part in the research process is not known, to which they openly accepted to participate.



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- **Violation of privacy**

Privacy implies an element of personal privacy while confidentiality means that the information provided would be handled confidentially. Strydom (2002), indicates that the privacy of the research participants could be violated if the researcher uses tape-recorders or hidden cameras without the consent of the participants. In this study, I ensured the participants that anything which the participant may reveal and feel it is too personal, will be protected and that the information they provide will solely serve for the purpose of the documentation of the research study. I ensured the research participants that the recorded tape would be destroyed or deleted at the end of the study and that if they wanted, they could have access to the tapes.

Participants were also informed that they could request the tape-recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview. I further informed the research participants that they would remain anonymous to everyone but myself, their identities would not be revealed and that their names would be replaced simply by their portfolios in the SGB as 'Mr Chairperson' and 'Mr Treasurer' or 'Madam Treasurer' during the transcription process of the clips.

## 3.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter I provided the rationale for the mixed methods that were engaged in the study, as well as the tools that were used to collect data. The sample was described and the sampling procedure explained. Steps that were followed in preparing for the field investigation were elucidated. Procedure that was followed when conducting interviews was explained. Validity and reliability of data collection as well as generalisability of the findings were also discussed. Ethical issues were considered. The next chapter presents an analysis, and interpretation of data derived from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this study. In Chapter 5, synthesised findings for educational contexts of the subject of study, parents involvement, and recommendations for further future studies on a similar subject, are made.



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# CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the mixed methodology research design which indicates the structure and procedures that were followed to answer the study's research questions. It has been revealed that the study was conducted in a sequence process of two phases. In this chapter, a presentation, analysis and interpretation of data derived from both quantitative Phase 1 and qualitative Phase 2 of the study is documented.

### 4.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Phase 1 employed a quantitative research methodology centered on survey responses and statistical analysis. The following paragraphs focus on reporting the empirical investigation by providing answers to the perceptions and understanding of educators on the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in the secondary schools of the Malamulele East Circuit. For the first quantitative phase of this study, data regarding parents' involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools was collected by using quantitative methods which involved the application of survey questionnaires from the educators in the Malamulele East Circuit. Five major themes emerged from the analysis of Phase 1 quantitative data, that is, the extent to which parents assist their children on homework activities, parents' participation in community forums towards children's improved academic performance, parents' communications with teachers, parents' engagement in school governance activities towards improved children's performance and parents' general attitude in the educational matters of their children. The responses to questionnaire items are presented graphically in tabular form and are followed by a brief synthesis of the findings for the items.



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## 4.3 RESPONDENTS' BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

### 4.3.1 Population distribution

This section presents the number of both male and female educator respondents and parents who took part during the first phase and second phase of this study.

**Table 4.1 Gender distribution of educator respondents**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Male | 87 | 51,2% |
| 2 | Female | 83 | 48,8% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The sample for the first phase of the study was consisted of 170 respondents for the survey questionnaires. Of the 170 respondents, 87 (51,2%) were males whereas 83 (48,8%) were females. All respondents returned the questionnaires, and all the 170 questionnaires were analysed. The returned questionnaires constitute 100 percent of the total issued questionnaires, which is interpreted in the following paragraphs. During the second phase of the study, eight participants were interviewed on a face-to-face interview sessions. Five of the eight participants were male SGB members, whereas three were female SGB members who represented the parents' component, and are graphically represented in the following table.

**Table 4.2 Gender distribution of parents' participants**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Male | 05 | 62,5% |
| 2 | Female | 03 | 37,5% |
| | TOTAL | 08 | 100% |



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### 4.3.2 Respondents age range

The following table presents the age of the educator respondents who took part during the first phase of this study:

**Table 4.3 Age of respondents**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Less than 30 years | 05 | 3,0% |
| 2 | 31 – 40 years | 73 | 43,0% |
| 3 | 41 – 50 years | 82 | 48,2% |
| 4 | 51 – 60 years | 10 | 5,8% |
| 5 | 61 years and older | | |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Most of the educator respondents who took part during the first phase of this study are middle-aged educators of between ages 31–40 (total 73, or 43,0%) and 41–50 (total 82, or 48,2%). Only 5 (3,0%) educator respondents were younger than 30 and 10 (5,8%) were aged between 51–60 years. The ages of the face-to-face interview participants during the second phase of the study were, for ethical reasons, not asked.

### 4.3.3 Respondents' teaching experience

The following table presents teaching experiences for all the educator respondents who answered the survey questionnaires.

**Table 4.4 Teaching experience**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0 – 10 years | 74 | 43,5% |
| 2 | 11 – 20 years | 64 | 37,6% |
| 3 | 21 – 30 years | 30 | 17,7% |
| 4 | 31 – 40 years | 02 | 1,2% |
| 5 | 41 – 50 years | | |
| 6 | 51 years and above | | |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |



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A large number of the respondents who took part during the first phase of this study have 0–10 years teaching experience being 74 (43,5%). Of the 170 educator respondents, 37,6% have between 11–20 years teaching experience and 17,7% have been in the teaching fraternity for 21–30 years. 2 respondents (1,2%) have 31–40 years teaching experience.

### 4.3.4 Respondents educational qualifications

Table 4.5 presents different educational qualifications of the educator respondents. For fear that the SGB parents' components participants during the second phase would withdraw their participation, they were not asked of their educational qualifications. Instead, the main point of departure in the interview with the SGB parents' components participants was solely based on they are involved in the education of their children in the respective secondary schools where they serve as SGB chairpersons and treasurers.

**Table 4.5 Educational qualifications**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Any teachers' Diploma | 109 | 64,1% |
| 2 | First Degree | 40 | 23,5% |
| 3 | Honours' Degree | 17 | 10,0% |
| 4 | Masters' Degree | 04 | 2,4% |
| 5 | Doctoral Degree | | |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority (109, or 64,1%) of the educator respondents who took part in the first phase of this study have only a teaching Diploma. Forty respondents (23,5%) possess their first degree whereas 17 (10%) have an Honours degree and 4 (2,4%) have a Master's degree.



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## 4.4 THE EXTENT OF PARENTS' ASSISTANCE ON THEIR CHILDREN'S HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES

In this section a presentation and analysis of data from statements regarding parents' assistance on their children's homework activities is made. Educators were requested to respond to the statements over a questionnaire, whereas parents deliberated their perceptions through interview.

### 4.4.1 Parents as assistance in their children's homework activities

Table 4.6 presents the perceptions of educators on the extent to which they view the assistance made by parents in their children's homework activities. On the other hand, most of the SGB parents' component revealed that apparently, most parents are unable to assist their children because of illiteracy.

**Table 4.6 Parents assist in homework activities**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 13 | 7,6% |
| 2 | Agree | 27 | 15,9% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 54 | 31,8% |
| 4 | Disagree | 51 | 30,0% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 25 | 14,7% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority of the educator respondents, 31,8% in the Malamulele East Circuit were not sure whether parents assist their children in executing their homework activities or not. Fifty-one (30,0%) believed that parents do not assist their children whereas 25 (14,7) strongly disagreed with the idea that parents have a helping hand in their children's homework. On the other hand, few educators at 13 (7,6%) strongly agreed that parents assist their children in doing their homework, whereas 27 (15,9%) simply agreed. Based on the first phase's responses, only 23,5% concur with Johnson et al. (2010), that children learn more



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when parents help their children in story-book reading at home and help their children to understand the meaning of what is being read. 130 respondents who constitute 76,5% concur with Desforges (2003), who emphasises the importance of parents involvement on their children's performance.

Participant no. 4, an SGB chairperson, stated that *"...most of the parents whose children attend school here are not educated, but they understand what education means to them and their children. Although they do not actually assist, they are supportive, you realise that because of their commitment whenever they are needed at school"*. It can be concluded that parents are willing to assist in the homework activities of their children, but illiteracy and home based activities hinders them from exercising the important assistance.

### 4.4.2 Parents' involvement in school activities improves learners' academic performance

Table 4.7 presents educators' views regarding the idea that parents in rural areas' involvement in school activities improve the academic performance of their children.

**Table 4.7 Parents' efforts' improves learners' academic performance**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 26 | 15,3% |
| 2 | Agree | 63 | 37,1% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 25 | 14,7% |
| 4 | Disagree | 39 | 22,9% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 17 | 10,0% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority (37,1%) agreed with the idea that parents efforts improve learner's academic performance in the Malamulele East Circuit. Meanwhile 14,7% of the respondents were not sure whether or not the efforts made by parents in the Malamulele East Circuit improves academic performance of learners in the secondary schools. Twenty-six (15,3%) strongly agreed with the idea.



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On the other hand, 22,9% merely agreed while 10,0% strongly disagreed that parents efforts are not contributing to the learners improved academic performance. Based on the responses obtained on whether parents efforts improves learner performance, the majority of the educators' respondents who agrees with what was earlier found by Lemmer (2007), and Epstein (2006), that students whose parents and teachers walk along the same wavelength find their children improving their academic performance in the classroom. This was supported by one parent during the second face-to-face interview who indicated that *"...although most parents are not literate, they are supportive and are concerned about the education of their children"*.

### 4.4.3 Parents learn how best they can assist their children

Table 4.8 presents educators' understanding of the extent to which parents could assist their children for better academic performance.

**Table 4.8 Parents learn from the teaching staff on how to assist their children**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 10 | 5,9% |
| 2 | Agree | 43 | 25,3% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 50 | 29,4% |
| 4 | Disagree | 52 | 30,6% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 15 | 8,8% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Fifty-two (30,6%) of the educator respondents disagreed with the idea that parents discuss ways that they can undertake to assist their children with teachers, 50 (29,4%) were not sure while 15 (8,8%) strongly disagreed. Just 10 (5,9%) educator respondents strongly agreed that parents and educators discuss ways to assist the children, whereby educators give direction to the parents on how best parents can assist their children to improve their performance at school. 43 (25,3%) simply



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agreed that parents learn from teachers on how they can assist their children at home to perform better at school. Participant number 5, a parent during the second phase of the study revealed that she doubted if parents really learn to assist their children in school activities, since the majority of the parents do not attend meetings whereby their children's performance issues are discussed. In addition, the participant revealed *"...we have never been invited to school as parents to discuss those important issues"*.

### 4.4.4 Parents check their children's activities and sign

It was important in this study to establish whether or not parents check their children's activities and append signatures on their work at home. Table 4.9 below show educators' observations on whether or not parents check their children's activities and sign.

**Table 4.9 Parents check class activities of their children and sign**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 09 | 5,3% |
| 2 | Agree | 22 | 13,0% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 35 | 20,6% |
| 4 | Disagree | 64 | 37,6% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 40 | 23,5% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

While 23,5% of the 170 educator respondents strongly disagreed with the idea that parents check their children's work. The majority of the educator respondents at 64 (37,6%) indicated that parents do not check their children's work. Twenty-two (13,0%) agreed that some parents check their children's work while just 9 (5,3%) strongly agreed with the idea that parents do have a look on their children's work and sign. Following Table 4.9, a total of 104 educator respondents were not of the idea that parents really check and sign their children's school activities.



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The SGB parents' component members indicated during the face-to-face interview that most parents do not stay with their children because of job related reasons. Furthermore, children who stay with guardians such as grandmothers, do not respect them and do not listen to their advice when it comes to school related matters. Participant number 3, for example mentioned *".....I have never tried to check the work of my own granddaughter, I want to believe that even the other community members do not generally check the homework of their children".* On the other hand, Epstein (2006), found that communication between teachers and parents is still wanting, whereby checking homework and signing by parents would be another form of communication.

### 4.4.5 Parents are always willing to assist when requested

It was also important in this study to establish whether or not parents in rural communities are willing to assist in the educational activities when requested. Table 4.10 shows educators' observations on the idea of parents' willingness to assist in the school matters where their children attend.

**Table 4.10 Parents are willing to assist when requested**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 09 | 5,3% |
| 2 | Agree | 65 | 38,2% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 41 | 24,1% |
| 4 | Disagree | 46 | 27,1% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 09 | 5,3% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority of the educator respondents at 65 (38,2%) agreed that only when requested, parents in the rural communities do render their assistance to the school's activities, only nine (5,3%) strongly agreed. Meanwhile 46 (27,1%) disagreed and 9 at 5,3% strongly disagreed whereas 41 (24,1%) were not sure



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whether parents are willing to assist when requested or not. Table 4.10 reveals that a total of 74 (43,5%) of the total number of respondents agreed with the idea that parents are willing to assist. This is confirmed again in the second face-to-face interviews of the study where participant number 4 who said, *"....parents are supportive even though they are illiterate"*. To show a positive attitude towards involvement, participant number 6 indicated that she thinks it is not difficult to get parents on board, by way of initiating regular parents meetings, and encouraging parents to attend, that reveals that parents are willing to assist in school activities when requested, despite being illiterate.

### 4.4.6 Parents search for homework information for their children

Another variable was focused on whether or not parents search for homework information for their children, in order to assist them. Table 4.11 shows educators' view regarding the idea that parents search for homework information for their children. This was important to determine causes and to establish a model along which parents would follow towards assisting their children for better performance at school.

**Table 4.11 Parents help in searching educational information for homework activities**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 05 | 2,9% |
| 2 | Agree | 29 | 17,1% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 52 | 30,6% |
| 4 | Disagree | 51 | 30,0% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 33 | 19,4% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Fifty-two (30,6%) of the educator respondents were not sure whether parents have the capacity to search for homework information for their children, on the other hand, 51 (30,0%) disagreed that parents help in searching educational



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information for homework activities of their children. Thirty-three (19,4%) of the educator respondents strongly disagreed that parents do search for educational information to assist their children with homework activities. On the other hand, 29 (17,1%) agreed that some parents who are literate assist their children in searching for educational information for homework of their children. Only 5 (2,9%) strongly agreed with the idea.

### 4.4.7 Parents ensures that their children's homeworks are completed

Educators respondents were further requested to indicate whether or not parents find themselves time to get their children's homework completed. The following table (Table 4.12) shows educators' views regarding their observations on whether or not parents in their surrounding rural communities find time to get homework of their children completed.

**Table 4.12 Parents ensures that their children's homeworks are completed**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 05 | 3,0% |
| 2 | Agree | 24 | 14,1% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 59 | 34,7% |
| 4 | Disagree | 64 | 37,6% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 18 | 10,6% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority of the educator respondents (37,6%) disagreed with the statement that parents find themselves time to work on their children's home tasks. Eighteen (10,6%) strongly disagreed and 34,7% revealed that they are not sure whether parents give themselves time enough to deal with their children's school work at home. On the other hand, 14,1% agreed with the idea that parents find time to get their children's homework activities done, while just 3% strongly agreed. It can be concluded from this statistics that parents in the rural communities of the Malamulele East Circuit do not give themselves time to assist their children with school work.



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In an earlier study, (Risimati,2001) I found that some of the barriers which inhibit parents from finding time to complete their children's school tasks include parents' ignorance, illiteracy, uncooperativeness and distance between the school and the homes of the parents.

## 4.5 PARENTS' PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY FORUMS TOWARDS CHILDREN'S IMPROVED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Another theme which arose from the survey questionnaires is the participation of parents in community development forums that are related to their children's academic success. This section discusses variables related to parents in rural areas participation to educational forums in the community for their children.

### 4.5.1 Parents volunteer in cleaning school premises

Table 4.13 shows the observation of educator respondents on whether parents volunteer in the cleaning services for the school.

**Table 4.13 Parents volunteer in cleaning school premises**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 25 | 14,7% |
| 2 | Agree | 57 | 33,6% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 13 | 7,6% |
| 4 | Disagree | 45 | 26,5% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 30 | 17,6% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Fifty-seven (33,6%) of the educator respondents agreed with the idea that parents do volunteer on the cleaning of the school's premises, and 25 (14,7%) strongly agreed. On the other hand, 45 (26,5%) disagreed that parents volunteer to clean the school premises whereas 30 (17,6%) strongly disagreed and 13 (7,6%) were not sure. According to the educator respondents, it is apparent that more educators at



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a total of 82 which constitute 48,3% have observed some parents coming to schools to volunteer in cleaning services. Almost half at 75 (44,1%) are against the idea. Participant number 1 in the face-to-face interview session attributed lack of parents' involvement in cleaning services to the inability of principals to invite parents in order to discuss cleanliness problem with them. The participant stated that *"...the principal only wait for the bad moment, that is when he will invite a parent to school"*. Most of the schools in the Malamulele East Circuit have non-teaching support staff, which includes cleaners, perhaps this is the reason behind none or lower participation of parents on cleaning services of schools.

### 4.5.2 Parents with expertise volunteer to teach when need arise

In order to develop an optimum model that will promote parents in rural communities' involvement in the education of the children, it was important for this study to have the variable on rendering teaching service by parents with expertise also included. Table 4.13 presents educators' observation of whether or not parents with expertise render voluntary teaching services in their respective schools.

**Table 4.14 Parents with expertise volunteer to teach**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 06 | 3,5% |
| 2 | Agree | 10 | 5,9% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 29 | 17,1% |
| 4 | Disagree | 66 | 38,8% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 59 | 34,7% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Regarding parents' support in terms of rendering their teaching services, 66 (38,8%) of the educator respondents disagreed while 34,7% strongly disagreed that some parents with expertise do teach the children on a voluntary basis. Only 5,9% and only 3,5% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that parents with capacities



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to teach do teach after school, and 17,1% were not sure in that regard. According to Table 4.13, the majority of the educator respondents (73,5%) indicated that there are no parents who come to the school to render any teaching service. This is attributed to the fact that most parents are illiterate, and are away from home to seek job opportunities. In addition, participant number 2 revealed that *"....in fact, the state of things educationally here in .....is that parents have left everything at the hands of teachers. The only time you will see a parent at school is when the child has committed an offence....."*. The participant's statement confirms educator respondents' observations, that parents with expertise do not render voluntary teaching services in those rural areas.

### 4.5.3 Parents with expertise volunteer to render career guidance

Another question which was asked of the educator respondents was whether or not, parents in the surrounding rural communities offer career guidance to their children. Table 4.15 indicates the educators' responses on the statement. This was important for this study as it sought to inquire the quality of education that parents are likely to contribute on their children.

**Table 4.15 Parents render career guidance services**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 05 | 2,9% |
| 2 | Agree | 28 | 16,5% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 33 | 19,4% |
| 4 | Disagree | 71 | 41,8% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 33 | 19,4% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority of educator respondents at 71 (41,8%) disagreed that parents render career guidance services for their children. While 33 (19,4%) were not sure, another 33 (19,4%) strongly disagreed with the idea that parents render career



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guidance services to their children. On the other hand, 28 (16,5%) agreed with the state that parents do guide their children on career opportunities and only (2,9%) strongly agreed with their idea. Table 4.14 reflects that most educator respondents at a total of 104 (70,2%) were not of the idea that parents render career guidance activities to their children at school. Apparently, parents believe that they can do nothing to assist their children in terms of career choices, hence participant number 8, a male treasurer indicated that *"....most of us we rely on teachers to provide enough career guidance so that at the end of the day, the child will choose on his own and choose accordingly. We still not clear on how best we can advise our children, surely"*.

### 4.5.4 Parents are members in community forums that discuss learner performance

The involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children was also assessed through examining whether parents participate in community forums which discuss education related matters. Table 4.16 present educators' observation of parents in that regard:

**Table 4.16 Parents take part in community educational forums**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 24 | 14,1% |
| 2 | Agree | 77 | 45,3% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 46 | 27,1% |
| 4 | Disagree | 14 | 8,2% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 09 | 5,3% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority of the educator respondents at a total of 101 (59,4%) agreed with the idea that parents do take part in the community educational forums to discuss their children's educational issues. Forty-six (27,1%) indicated that they were not sure and a total of 23 (13,5%) disagreed that parents attend community meetings



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to discuss their children's educational matters. Following Table 4.15, it is evident that parents in the Malamulele East Circuit do not attend community forums that discuss learner performance issues. On the other hand, some participants who were interviewed during the second the face-to-face interview sessions indicated that meetings to discuss learner performance matters are rare, because principals do not initiate them, they went further to indicate that, perhaps, the School Management Team (SMT) and the School Governing Body (SGB) should jointly organise meetings whereby learner performance issues will be discussed. Lockhead and Levin (1993), Davies (1993) and Epstein (1996) all found that when parents, teachers and students view one another in a formal sitting as partners in education, a caring community around students will begin to work.

## 4.6 PARENTS' COMMUNICATIONS WITH TEACHERS

In this section, a presentation and analysis of data from statements regarding parents' communication with teachers on their children's homework activities is made. Educators were requested to respond to the statements in a questionnaire, whereas parents reflected their deeper understanding of the theme through interviews. According to Epstein (2006), communication, parenting, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community are the key types of parental involvement that a normal school should put into practice.

### 4.6.1 Parents and teachers work together to achieve shared goals

It was important to investigate whether or not parents and teachers work together to achieve shared goals, so as to find better ways in which parents in rural communities could get involved in the education of their children. Table 4.17 shows educators' responses in terms of the cooperativeness that exist between teachers and parents.



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Table 4.17 Parents and educators work together to achieve shared goals

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 24 | 14,1% |
| 2 | Agree | 55 | 32,4% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 28 | 16,6% |
| 4 | Disagree | 53 | 31,2% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 10 | 5,7% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Most (32,4%) educator respondents agreed that educators and parents work together towards a shared goal of improving learners performance, on the other hand, 53 (31,2%) educator respondents disagreed with the idea of parents working together with educators for a shared goal of improving children's performance. Twenty-four (14,1%) educator respondents strongly agreed that there was a working together between parents and educators for a common shared goal, whereas only 10 (5,7%) strongly disagreed. Although the difference between the number of educator respondents who agreed and those who disagreed was just sixteen, the face-to-face interview sessions found two participants remarking that apparently teachers undermine the capability of parents, to an extent that they don't border themselves to invite them to discuss a common shared goal in anyway. For example, the SGB parent component participant number 1 indicated that *"..... teachers like to take decisions without parents in most cases"*. In addition, participant number 2 indicated that *".....parents and teachers are not walking along the same wavelength, although some of the parents are of course, touched by the manner in which their children perform at school"*.

### 4.6.2 Parents discuss their children's' educational issues with teachers

This statement was important since it sought to inquire whether or not parents in rural communities find time to discuss educational issues of their children with teachers. My earlier study (Risimati, 2001) regarding parents and teachers coming



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together to discuss educational issues of the children revealed that parents are unable to find time for such important discussions. Amongst other reasons that were presented have illiteracy and job related opportunities serving as a barrier for parents-teacher meetings. Table 4.18 shows educators' responses regarding the statement.

**Table 4.18 Parents discuss education issues with teachers after school**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 08 | 4,7% |
| 2 | Agree | 25 | 14,7% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 31 | 18,2% |
| 4 | Disagree | 70 | 41,2% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 36 | 21,2 |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority (41,2%) of the educator respondents did not agree with the idea that parents meet with educators after school to discuss their children's education issues. Thirty-six (21,2%) strongly disagreed with the idea. On the other hand, 14,7% agreed that parents do meet educators to discuss education issues of their children, while just 8 at 4,7% strongly disagreed. A total of 106 (62,4%)respondents disagreed with the idea that parents discuss their children's educational issues with teachers after school.

A number of SGB parent participants also mentioned that most of the learners do not stay with their parents. Participant no.1, for example indicated that *"....most children again don't live with their parents, instead they are head of families since parents are away seeking for job opportunities in Johannesburg. Others are at ZZ2, so teacher you can see what kind of learners we are talking about here"*. The implication that is drawn from the parents' statements is that some learners are bound to take care of their younger sisters and brothers, to see to it that they too, go to school. The conclusion is that some of the learners in the



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Malamulele East Circuit do not have parents to represent them either in community educational forums or at school with teachers.

### 4.6.3 Parents attend organised meetings with teachers

Although parents have legal rights and a say in their children's education, there is still some evidence from Table 4.19 which indicates that parents' roles are still minimal at schools. Table 4.19 presents educators' perceptions regarding whether or not parents do attend organised meetings with teachers.

**Table 4.19 Parents attend meetings with the school staff.**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 16 | 9,4% |
| 2 | Agree | 86 | 50,6% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 16 | 9,4% |
| 4 | Disagree | 37 | 21,8% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 15 | 8,8% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Eighty-six (50,6%) of the educator respondents indicated that the majority of parents attend meetings at school with the school staff so that they are able to discuss issues relating to their children's education. Thirty-seven (21,8%) disagreed that parents attend meetings at school, while 16 (9,4%) educator respondents strongly agreed, 15 (8,8%) on the other hand strongly disagreed. Sixteen (9,4%) were not sure whether parents do attend organised meetings or not.

Although the table (Table 4.19) reveals that most educator respondents have agreed that parents do attend meetings, participant number 1 on the face-to-face interview session indicated that the majority of parents only attend meetings to discuss money issues, for example financial reports, and only when there is a support staff vacancy at school. The participant indicated that "*.....otherwise, the*



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*other times that we as SGB are invited to school, is when there are money issues such as reporting, which I think they are bound to call us on meetings of that nature by law. Otherwise I don't understand what kind of a school it would be without citizens being part of it*". The SGB member further went on to reveal that "*....maybe they undermine us, or maybe they have realised that most of the learners stay alone at home because their parents are at Johannesburg for work, they only come back during December*". Furthermore, participant number 5, a treasurer, revealed that they definitely had never been invited to a meeting as parents to discuss important educational issues. Participants indicate that most of the parents are not staying with their children who attend school. On the other hand, the least number of parents who are available at home and staying with their school children are simply ignorant. It can be concluded that despite the importance of parents' involvement and the powers that have been given by the government on parents, many parents are still not actively involved in school activities.

### 4.6.4 Parents regularly attend meetings on their children's academic activities at school

The opinion of educators on whether or not parents regularly attend meetings on their children's academic activities at school was also sought for. Table 4.20 presents the responses.

**Table 4.20 Parents regularly attend meetings about their children's academic activities**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 12 | 7,1% |
| 2 | Agree | 55 | 32,4% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 14 | 8,2% |
| 4 | Disagree | 71 | 41,8% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 18 | 10,5% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |



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More educator respondents (41,8%) revealed that parents do not regularly attend meetings at which their children's academic activities are discussed. On the other hand, 32,4% educator respondents agreed that parents do attend meetings while 12 (7,1%) strongly agreed and 18 (10,5%) strongly disagreed. Fourteen (8,2%) of the educator respondents were not sure about the regular attendance of parents on teachers and parents joint meetings. While more educator respondents indicated that parents do attend meetings without educators to discuss possible ways in which they can support their children. Another SGB's parent participant indicated that *"...the only times that the school invites us is when there is an issue to be discussed, but not related to learners' general performance"*. It can be concluded that not all schools in the rural communities of Malamulele East invite parents to discuss their children's academic performance, and to find ways of improving it.

### 4.6.5 Parents regularly enquire about their children's level of achievement

It was also important in this study to find out whether or not parents in the rural communities regularly enquire with teachers about their children's level of achievement. Table 4.21 below is a presentation of the educators' responses on the statement.

**Table 4.21 Parents regularly enquire about the performance of their children**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 07 | 4,1% |
| 2 | Agree | 50 | 29,4% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 29 | 17,1% |
| 4 | Disagree | 62 | 36,5% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 22 | 12,9% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |



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Only 4,1% strongly agreed to the idea that parents need updates regarding the performance of their children regularly. Fifty (29,4%) of the educator respondents just agreed to the idea that parents often enquire about the progress made by their children at school. On the other hand, a total of 49,4% disagreed with the statement that parents regularly enquire about the progress performance made by their children at school, whereas another 29 (17,1%) were not sure.

When asked whether parents collects quarterly reports by themselves, participant no. 8 during the face–to-face interviews revealed that *"Not all of them(parents) come to collect reports, some come, most don't come, they believe their children shall collect on their own. Some children simply adopts fake parents along the road to collect on their behalf, I have observed this since I work as a food gardener to supplement what is provided by the National Schools Nutrition Programme. Even myself, you find that some learners approach me during those times to go and the collect the reports on behalf of their parents, actually, very few biological parents ever bother themselves to come and collect".*

The conclusion that could be drawn from both educators' responses and the parents is that parents do not seek updates from teachers regarding the academic performance of their children. This was confirmed by participant no. 2, an SGB chairperson who revealed that *"there are those parents who wait until the child has failed at the end of the year, then you will see them coming to complain that heeeeey ....these teachers don't teach.....teachers are always drunk.....and many more stories. Other cases leaves many unanswered questions, because you realise that this learner collects a report by himself/herself, no worrying parent to come and collect....to see the performance of his/her child".*

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### 4.6.6 Parents communicate with teachers through letters about their children's academic activities

It was important in this study to investigate whether or not there is communication between teachers and the parents of learners in the different schools, since Epstein (2006), identified communication as one of the six key performance areas for parents' involvement, particularly in rural areas. Table 4.22 presents educators' responses regarding parents' communication with teachers.

**Table 4.22 Parents communicate with teachers through letters on learners' activities**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 11 | 6,5% |
| 2 | Agree | 28 | 16,5 |
| 3 | Not Sure | 28 | 16,5 |
| 4 | Disagree | 61 | 35,9% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 42 | 24,6% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

With communication being one of the key indicators of parent-teachers commitment towards learners improved performance, only 39 (23,0%) educator respondents agreed with the idea that there is communication between parents and educators regarding the children. On the other hand, a total of 103 (60,5%) disagree with the statement which suggests that more parents respond to educators call for communication regarding their children's state of schooling. In the process, 28 (16,5%) indicated that they are not sure whether there is communication between educators and parents or not.

Participant no. 6, a female treasurer indicated that *"....it's rare for the principal to invite a meeting for parents to discuss learner performance.....I'm not sure maybe it's because there is also a lot of school work that other side for the*



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*teachers and the management"* to show that there is lack of communication between schools and parents. However, as an SGB chairperson, the participant suggested that an item in the next SGB meeting will be there for them to find ways in which communication between parents and the school can be improved.

### 4.6.7 Parents attend all school meetings when invited

This statement was also important for this study since parents in rural communities' involvement in education of their children is revealed through attendance of meetings, amongst other things. Table 4.23 reflects educators' responses on the statement.

**Table 4.23 Parents attend all school meetings when invited**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 14 | 8,2% |
| 2 | Agree | 54 | 31,8% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 13 | 7,6% |
| 4 | Disagree | 66 | 38,9% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 23 | 13,5% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

In schools, a meeting is one form of communication which puts the mission of the school into practice. Only 8,2% strongly agreed that parents in the rural communities of Malamulele East Circuit attend school meetings when invited. Fifty-four (31,8%) of the educator respondents simply agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 66 (38,9%) disagreed while 23 (13,5%) strongly disagreed meaning that a total of 52,4% of the educator respondents reveal that parents do not attend meetings when invited to schools. Only 13 (7,6%) indicated that they were not sure about this idea.



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Participant no. 7, another female treasurer, stated that *"....we hardly attend meetings for example. In most cases, only parents of children who stay nearby do attend school meetings, but parents of those children who use transport to come to school, rarely come to the meetings. Again, even parents from nearby villages, most are ignorant that they don't turn up, yet they complain when their children fail at the end of the year"*. The implication that is drawn from the parent's statement is that, meetings are rarely attended. Apparently, most parents only attend meetings when they are told that there will be an employment opportunity to be provided to a number of parents, otherwise, they do not attend. Earlier, literature (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Risimati, 2001) found that parents in rural areas have time constraints when it comes to participating in school related matters, in addition, most parents are single that they are bread winners in their respective families, meaning that they are unable to live they jobs for school meetings.

## 4.7 PARENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES TOWARDS IMPROVED CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE

Parents have been allocated powers to run all governance activities of the school (SASA, 1996). This section presents school governance related items regarding the extent to which parents in the rural communities in Malamulele East are involved in the educational activities of their children. School governance is a feature of school leadership which entails the processes and systems by which schools should operate, it incorporates the structures of authority in collaboration with the allocation of resources, co-ordinating and controlling of school activities linked with the management of the school.

### 4.7.1 Parents are part of the school's policy development committee

It was also important in this study to determine whether or not parents are part of the school policy development committee, since the resolutions taken by such committees eventually influence the performance of learners.



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**Table 4.24 Parents are members of school policy development committee**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 28 | 16,5% |
| 2 | Agree | 80 | 47,1% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 30 | 17,6% |
| 4 | Disagree | 26 | 15,3% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 06 | 3,5% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

While twenty-eight (16,5%) of the educator respondents strongly agreed, eighty respondents (47, 1%) just agreed that parents of learners in the Malamulele East Circuit are part of the school Policy development committee. On the other hand, twenty-six (15,3%) of the educator respondents disagreed and only 6 (3,5%) strongly disagreed with the idea that parents contribute in the school development policy. Thirty (17,6%) respondents were not sure whether parents are part or not part of the school's policy development committee.

Participant no. 8 stated that *"…….unfortunately, very few participate in meetings. Once we are on meetings some even sleep, some just get silent like they are security forces in the army (laughing), but at the end, for any presentation given by the Principal, you find them abiding by that resolution. They don't participate, in times of elections for SGB sub-committees, you will find the same people who were elected before in previous terms, taking the office for the third or even fourth term"*. The implication from the parent's statement is that most parents are not part of the policy development committee. However, parents who are SGB members try to have a word on school policy development. For example, the treasurer who is a Finance Committee chairperson is part of the Finance Policy formulation. Most of the parents who are not part of the SGB executive committee, do not border themselves to come to school when there is policy formulation meetings.



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### 4.7.2 Parents are members in the governing body of the school

It was also important to know whether or not parents in the rural communities in Malamulele East are members in the school governing bodies of their respective secondary schools. Table 4.25 reflects educators' responses on this statement.

**Table 4.25 Parents are members of the school governing body**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 94 | 55,3% |
| 2 | Agree | 68 | 40,0% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 04 | 2,4% |
| 4 | Disagree | 03 | 1,8% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 01 | 0,5% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

The majority of educator respondents at 94 (55,3%) strongly agreed that parents are part of the school governing body, 68 (40,0%) only agreed. On the other hand, 1,8% of the respondents disagreed and just 1 (0,5%) strongly disagreed with the idea that parents are members of the school governing body. Only 4 (2,4%) revealed that they are not sure whether parents are members of school governing body or not. Results show that parents in Malamulele East Circuit do take part in SGB. Perhaps, the few educator respondents who disagreed with the item argue that most of the parents do not want to take part in SGB. This was also revealed by Participant no. 6 during the face-to-face interviews; "*……you will find that the majority of parents who come are from the nearby village*" referring to parents who attend SGB election meetings. Parents of children who are from other feeder villages are reluctant from being members of the SGB, if ever they happen to come to the SGB elections meeting, they do not stand for nominations to be elected.



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### 4.7.3 Parents are part of community forums for school related matters

Since some community forums today discuss educational matters, it was important to investigate whether or not parents in the rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit do attend community forums where school related matters are discussed. Table 4.26 reflects educators' observations in that regard.

**Table 4.26 Parents take part in community educational forums**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 24 | 14,1% |
| 2 | Agree | 77 | 45,3% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 46 | 27,1% |
| 4 | Disagree | 14 | 8,2% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 09 | 5,3% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Just 14,1% of the educator respondents strongly agreed with the idea, 45,3% simply agreed that parents attend community forums for educational matters discussions. Forty-six (27,1%) of the educator respondents indicated that they are not sure and a total of 23 (13,5%) disagreed that parents attend community meetings to discuss their children's educational matters. Although most educator respondents indicated that parents take part in community meetings which discuss their children's educational matters, the face-to-face interview participants revealed that there are no proper organised community meetings that are meant to discuss learners' performance issues at school. On this regard, participant number 8during the second phase of the study simply mentioned that his idea was that"*..... actually, the SMT and the SGB should find ways of trying to have a maximum participation by parents on meetings*(referring to both school meetings and community meeting where educational issues are discussed), *which start at maximum attendance. But if that fails, Mr. Baloyi, the only option left is for the teachers to try and work harder without parents, there's no other way, what can they (teachers) do*".



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### 4.7.4 Parents contribute for their children's educational trips

Parents in rural communities' involvement in the educational activities of their children also include payments for their children to undertake educational trips. It was important in this study to find out whether or not parents contribute for their children's educational trips. Table 4.27 presents educators' responses in that regard.

**Table 4.27 Parents contribute in educational trips of their children**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 19 | 11,2% |
| 2 | Agree | 102 | 60,0% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 14 | 8,2% |
| 4 | Disagree | 26 | 15,3% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 9 | 5,3% |
| | TOTAL | 100 | 100% |

According to the educator respondents, a total of 71,2% are of the idea that parents contribute towards the success of their children through the attendance of educational trips. Just 5,3% strongly disagreed with the statement whereas 15,3% simply disagreed. Fourteen (8,2%) of the educator respondents indicated that they were not sure whether parents assist their children to undertake educational trips or not. Surprisingly, despite parents' reluctance to be involved in academic activities of their children on a day to day basis, they respond positively when it comes to payments of educational trips for their children.

The implication behind parents turning in large numbers to pay for educational trips might be a result of children pressurising their parents to pay. One educator remarked that whenever learners undertake an educational trip, in most cases, they come back home being drunk in the buses, meaning that engage to other matters that are non-educational during their visits.



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### 4.7.5 Parents are also members in schools' career exhibition committee

Careers are paths through which children should realise their ultimate goal of becoming independent. Under normal circumstances parents should have a helping hand on determining the ultimate career for their children. It was important in this study to find out whether or not parents participate in schools career exhibition committees. Table 4.28 reflects educators' responses in that regard.

**Table 4.28 Parents are members of the school career exhibitions committee**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 06 | 3,5% |
| 2 | Agree | 34 | 20,0% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 45 | 26,5% |
| 4 | Disagree | 55 | 32,4% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 30 | 17,6% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Only 3,5% strongly agreed with the idea that parents are members in the career exhibition committee. Thirty-four (20,0%) simply agreed whereas 32,4% disagreed and 17,6% strongly disagreed. Forty-five (26,5%) of the educator respondents indicated that they were not sure whether parents are members in the school career exhibition committees or not. When asked whether parents assist their children in terms of career related matters, participant no. 8 indicated that *"……things are changing day by day, but here we have so many parents who are still uncertain about what they wish their child could be. Most of us we rely on teachers to provide enough career guidance so that at the end of the day, the child will choose on his own and choose accordingly. We still not clear on how best we can advice our children, surely"*. The implication is that most parents in the rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit put all their trust in the teachers. It is evident that they do not provide any form of guidance to offer their children a set of careers from which to choose.



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### 4.7.6 Parents are members of the learners' disciplinary committee

Section8(1) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 mandates the SGB to establish a disciplinary committee and relates it as "subject to any applicable provincial law, a governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school". It was important also in this study to establish whether parents in the rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit avail themselves to become members in the disciplinary committee of their children. Table 4.29 reflects educators' responses regarding their observations on the statement.

**Table 4.29 Parents are members of learners Disciplinary Committee**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 05 | 2,9% |
| 2 | Agree | 47 | 27,6% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 21 | 12,4% |
| 4 | Disagree | 61 | 35,8% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 36 | 21,3% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Despite the prescriptions by the South African School's Act 84 of 1996 that parents should constitute an integral part of the school's disciplinary committee, only 27,6% of the educator respondents agreed that parents are members of the disciplinary committee of the school. Just 2,9% strongly agreed to the statement, suggesting that more parents are not part of the disciplinary committee. The majority (35,8%) of the educator respondents disagreed with the statement, whereas 21,3% strongly disagreed. Twenty-one (12,4%) of the educator respondents revealed that they were not sure whether parents are included in the schools' disciplinary committees or not.



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Apparently, there is no disciplinary committee which includes parents within it in the Malamulele East Circuit schools. Participant no. 1 indicated that "……*the only time you find a parent at school is when there is a case against that parent's child. I think it is not fair, because the Principal only wait for the bad moment, that is when he will invite a parent to school* ……". The implication behind this statement is that the schools might be using the SMT as disciplinary committee instead of including also the parents and the learners as prescribed by the Act.

### 4.7.7 Parents monitor the behaviour of their children on school related activities

The behaviour of learners at home significantly influences their performance at school. It was therefore important in this study to examine the roles parents in the rural communities play in monitoring the behaviour of their children towards better academic performance at school. Table 4.30 reflects educators' responses in that regard.

**Table 4.30 Parents monitor the behaviour of their learners on school related matters**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 06 | 3,5% |
| 2 | Agree | 41 | 24,1% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 32 | 18,8% |
| 4 | Disagree | 52 | 30,7% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 39 | 22,9% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Only 3,5% of the educator respondents strongly agreed that parents monitor the behaviour of their children on school related matters at home. Forty-one (24,1%) simply indicated that they agree. On the other hand, 22,9% strongly disagreed with the statement whereas the majority (30,7%) of the educator respondents



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simply disagreed. Only 18,8% of the educators marked that they are not sure whether or not parents monitor their children on school related matters at home. The implication based on educators' responses is that parents do not monitor their children's behaviour at home in terms of monitoring studies and other school tasks.

To concur with the educators' responses during Phase 1 of the study, participant no.7, an SGB treasurer, blamed parents' absence at home, indicating that there is nobody who is available to monitor the children. He further mentioned that "*……some are owners of families, some have both their parents staying in Jo'burg and farms due to work related reasons, some stay with their parents but their parent – child relationship is not good because of the child's bad behaviour claiming that they have rights. You know Mr. Baloyi there are a lot of challenges but, those challenges don't mean that there are no parents at all who assist their children, they are there, but they are few*".

## 4.8 PARENTS' GENERAL ATTITUDE IN THE EDUCATIONAL MATTERS OF THEIR CHILDREN

In this section the general attitude of parents towards the education of their children was examined.

### 4.8.1 Attendance of annual meetings to collect their children's reports

Annual meetings in schools are highly decisive on planning of all educational activities for the school, particularly for the upcoming academic year. Parents therefore should ensure that meetings of this nature are attended without fail. It was important in this study to inquire whether or not parents in rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit attend annual general meetings to collect their children's reports. Table 4.31 reflects educators' responses of their observations on whether or not parents personally come to school to collect annual reports.



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**Table 4.31 Parents personally collect reports annually**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 35 | 20,6% |
| 2 | Agree | 100 | 58,8% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 12 | 7,1% |
| 4 | Disagree | 17 | 10,0% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 06 | 3,5% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

With regard to the collection of performance reports at the end of the year, 100 (58,8%) respondents showed that parents do come to schools to collect reports, to show their involvement, 35 (20,6%) strongly agreed with the idea. On the other hand, a total of 23 respondents constituting 13,5% disagreed with the statement, meaning that to them, parents do not even collect their children's reports at the end of the year, and this indicates that such parents are never involved in the education of their children. Twelve (7,1%) respondents revealed that they are not sure whether parents collect their children's reports or not. A total of 125 educator respondents who constitute 79,4% agreed with the idea that parents do come to school at the end of the year to collect their children's progress reports.

While indicating parents' reluctance to attend meetings at school throughout the year, participant no.7 indicated that a number of parents do attend meetings to collect reports by mentioning that " *....come the end of the quarter, you will see some irresponsible faked parents coming for reports, some parents are of the same age with learners, then you can see that there is a challenge in terms of the real biological parent. That have led teachers to issue reports straight to the learners themselves because for some learners, particularly those who do not have parents it was becoming a problem. And sometimes you cannot ask where your father is....you understand Mr. Baloyi...sometimes passed away.....sometimes I don't know my father...my mother is in Polokwane working there, such stories*". The implication that is drawn from the statement is that not all parents collect reports on their own.



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### 4.8.2 Parents strive to find resources to assist their children in learning

In order to assess whether or not parents in rural communities are involved in the education of their children, it was further essential to investigate their efforts to finding resources which could assist their children. Table 4.32 shows educators' responses in that regard.

**Table 4.32 Parents strives to find resources to assist their children's learning**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 08 | 4,7% |
| 2 | Agree | 41 | 24,1% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 49 | 28,8% |
| 4 | Disagree | 52 | 30,6% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 20 | 11,8% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Regarding parents efforts to supplement their children's support materials for schooling, 4,7% of the educator respondents strongly agreed, whereas 24,1% simply agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 11,8% strongly disagreed while 11,8% simply disagreed and 28,8% were not sure whether or not parents do find ways to supplement the support materials provided by the schools. In this regard, participant no. 4 during the face-to-face interviews indicated that although some parents are illiterate to an extent that they cannot assist with homework, "…….*they* (meaning some parents) *are supportive*". The conclusion that could be drawn some parents do strive to find supplementary educational materials, this confirms a total of 28,8% of the educator respondents who agreed with the statement.



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### 4.8.3 Parents ensure that their children are punctual to school

Punctuality is one of the important factors that might negatively affect learners' academic performance in schools if not properly checked. It was also important in this study to inquire whether or not parents in rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit ensure that their children are punctual to school. Table 4.33 reflects educators' responses in that regard.

**Table 4.33 Parents ensures punctuality of their children to school**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 16 | 9,4% |
| 2 | Agree | 57 | 33,5% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 38 | 22,4% |
| 4 | Disagree | 41 | 24,1% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 18 | 10,6% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |

Just 9,4% of the educator respondents strongly agreed with the idea that parents find ways to get their children on time to school. Table 4.33 shows that the majority (33,5%) of educator respondents agreed with the idea that parents ensures punctuality of their children to school. Forty-one (24,1%) of the educator respondents disagreed with the statement, whereas 10,6% strongly disagreed. Another 22,4% indicated that they were not sure whether parents are concerned about the late or early coming of their children to school.

On the other phase of the study, participant number 1 revealed that although there are some parents who are less concerned about the education of their own children, there are others who find ways to get their children to school in time. Participant no. 1 indicated that " ….. *I would say that the few parents who are available encourage their children to come early to school, because I have observed several cars that are taking these children to school every morning*



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*and again back home in the afternoon. The understanding is that, parents are paying these organised cars for transport purposes. But I wouldn't mention that there is 100% punctuality in this school because there are still others who come late and stay outside the gate, because teachers have decided to lock off learners who come late to school".* In addition, participant no. 4 mentioned that *"at this school, there is little late coming, despite the fact that this school does not have a scholar transport system, we only have the National School Nutrition Programme running well, so it also help us in truancy because our children attend classes without complaining of hunger, which could lead to truancy".* The implication behind the statements of the two participants is that through parents involvement, there is minimal late coming in schools in the Malamulele East Circuit. This confirms the 73 (42,9%) educator respondents who agreed at the expense of 59 (34,7%) who disagreed with the statement, 38 (22,4%) of the educator respondents were not sure.

### 4.8.4 Parents participate in fundraising activities of the school

Finances are at the centre of the smooth running of all school activities. Although schools in the rural areas are allocated maximum funding by the government being in quintile 1 or 2, more fundraising by schools is still allowed. It was also essential in this study to inquire whether or not parents in rural communities participate in fundraising activities of their respective schools. Table 4.34 reflects educators' responses in that regard.

**Table 4.34 Parents take part in fundraising activities of the school**

| | Response | Frequencies | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Strongly agree | 05 | 3,0% |
| 2 | Agree | 25 | 14,7% |
| 3 | Not Sure | 32 | 18,8% |
| 4 | Disagree | 67 | 39,4% |
| 5 | Strongly disagree | 41 | 24,1% |
| | TOTAL | 170 | 100% |



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Only 3,0% strongly agreed with the statement that parents take part in fundraising activities of the school. Twenty-five (14,7%) disagreed with the idea while on the other hand 24,1% strongly disagreed. The majority (39,4%) of the educator respondents indicated that they disagree with the statement whereas 32 (18,8%) were not sure whether or not parents participate in fundraising activities. Table 4.34 shows that there are more educator respondents (63,5%) who disagreed with the statement than the total of those who agreed and those who were not sure. Based on the table, it can be concluded that parents in rural areas in the Malamulele East Circuit do not engage in fundraising activities of the school.

The reason behind parents' reluctance to engage in fundraising activities might be that all schools in the Circuit are in quintile 1 and 2 according to the Department of Education's categorisation of schools for funding purposes. Being in quintile 1 and 2 means that they are no fee schools, which imply that the School Governing Bodies are not, by law, required to charge parents school fees. However, parents are still encouraged to outsource other fees to supplement the norms and standards that are allocated to schools by the Department of Education.

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## 4.9 SUMMARY

In this chapter I presented and interpretated data for the first quantitative phase, followed by the contextual analysis of the second qualitative study. From both phases, it became evident that not all parents are fully involved in the learning process of their children. The gap that was found by Epstein (2001), between the rhetoric and practice with regard to parent involvement in school activities of their children still prevail even today. Earlier, it was found by Mbokodi and Msila (2004), that parents send their children to schools with the expectation that they will get quality education in order to secure their future with a decent vocation, even without their involvement. In this study, both respondents and participants revealed that there is an unhealthy relationship between the school as a whole and the parents. They showed that, the attitude of parents towards better learning of



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their children still requires to be lightened up. On being asked to comment on their suggestions, most of the face-to-face interview participants indicated that they would like the community to come together, to be united with the schools and develop teams that will assist learners to improve in their learning processes. Ngidi and Qwabe (2006), indicated that parents, educators and principals as a group should all be concerned with partnership that should normally exist to encourage the culture of learning and teaching, regardless of socio-economic status of the parents in general. The oncoming chapter will round off this study with a list of findings, recommendations and possible future research possibilities and a conclusion on the theme of relationships between schools and communities in rural areas.



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# CHAPTER 5

## SYNTHESIS, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter an overview of the study is documented focusing on the research question, aims of the study and the research methods applied to solve the research problem. A synthesised summary of findings is also presented followed by recommendations for both the context of the study and for future research study on a similar research domain. The study closes by providing possible limitations of the study that might possibly to a certain extent, have influenced the results.

### 5.2 OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

The first chapter presented an orientation of this study, whereby a background, problem statement, aims, critical research questions, hypothesis of the study were properly documented. It was further reflected that the study is placed over a mixed methodology research design. The area over which the study was conducted is indicated as delimitations of the study, followed by all ethical considerations in the process of investigation and its significance. The first chapter further closed by providing an outline of what the study will entail in subsequent Chapters 2 to 5.

This study was an endeavour to establish the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools. The study was specifically set out to describe and explore the extent to which parents in rural communities of secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit are involved in the education of their children. The study used a mixed method research design, hence qualitative inquiry in Phase 2 of the study went beyond the quantitative descriptive information and conduct an in-depth investigation to present participants' experiences of reality (Henning et al., 2004).



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Researchers agree that qualitative data present the accounts of insiders as the accounts of reality (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). A mixed method research design strategy was chosen in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the problem under investigation from the perspective of face-to-face interviews research participants. Data was analysed with the aid of tables to present respondents' perceptions in terms of percentages, followed by texts from the face-to-face interviews and some inferences from literature to support the findings.

The aims of the study were:

- to inquire into the involvement parents in rural communities in facilitation of their children's secondary school education,
- to empirically assess parents in rural communities' involvement on their children's secondary school education,
- to develop a model through which parents should be involved in the education of their children.

The critical research questions were:

- What role do parents in rural communities play in facilitating their children's education at secondary school?
- What contributions do parents in rural communities make with regard to their children's secondary schooling?
- What model can be developed to assure maximum parents involvement for quality education of their children at secondary schools?



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In the process of addressing the study's aims and to answer the research questions, it was hypothesised that there would be a correlation between:

- the role played by parents in rural communities in their children's secondary school education and the education which they obtain from the relationship,
- the parents in rural communities' involvement in the education of their children and the level of success in terms of secondary education of their children.

## 5.3 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

A study of relevant literature revealed that most parents particularly in rural areas do not get involved in the education of their children. However, it has been found that in areas where there is a better home-school-community partnership, teachers teach effectively and learners ultimately do well (Henderson, 2002). The majority of educator respondents during the first phase of the study also disagreed with the idea that parents are fully involved in the education of their children in the eleven secondary schools of the Malamulele East Circuit. There are few cases of parents who are actively involved in the education of their children. Results of the study reveal that principals do not invite parents to schools for meetings that would discuss educational issues of their children. To the participants, principals are only bound by the Department of Education's prescripts which govern the financial management of all public schools to invite parents for financial purposes only.

The empirical evidence revealed that parents are reluctant to volunteer in providing cleaning services in schools because they are engaged in their own job opportunities. In addition, most of the parents are single and they are breadwinners in their respective families. Results further indicate that the only active means of communications is through quarterly reporting by teachers.



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However, few parents go to school to collect reports since, most of them are away in Gauteng and other farm areas for job opportunities. The study also found that teachers issues reports to the learners themselves for fear of the Departmental Policy which directs that no learner should be deprived a right to know his or her progress. Participants further alluded that the time that is allocated for parents to visit schools is inconvenient to them, and they think it is a strategy by school authorities to keep them away from school.

The empirical evidence also revealed that despite some barriers between the home-school partnership, parents are willing to assist their children. This was evident when participants revealed that parents are supportive although most of them are away from home and some cannot read or write. It was further revealed that parents do contribute in the educational trips of their children. The empirical study revealed that some parents attend meetings at school although it is only those who live in the village where the school is located. In short, the study investigated successfully the extent to which parents in rural communities play in facilitating their children's education at secondary school, and the contributions that parents in rural communities make with regard to their children's access to secondary education. Furthermore, the study has successfully explored the attitudes that parents in rural communities have on their involvement in school activities of their children and the possibilities of those parents to improve and enhance their children's access to secondary education. One of the participants during the second phase of the study revealed that the best possible solution is for teachers to work hard even without parents. At the same time, the school's SMT and the SGB should establish a parent's involvement policy which will see more parents getting involved in the educational activities of their children.

It has also been emphasised by the minister of Basic Education that the Department cannot teach citizens of South Africa without citizens. This was



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mentioned on March 18, 2011 during the launch of the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU). The hypothesis that was initially set, that there will be a correlation between the role played by individual parents in their children's secondary school education and the education which their children obtain has been realised. In addition, the study has proved that there is a correlation between the parents' contribution and the levels of success in terms of access to secondary education of their children.

### 5.3.1 Findings from literature

Literature that was reviewed covered a variety of aspects on parents' involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools throughout the world and South Africa in particular. It revealed that there are benefits when parents get involved in the education of their children in schools, for example, learners learn better, teachers experiences more positive feelings about teaching with greater parental involvement, learners earn better scores in their various subjects, high failure rate is minimised, behavioural problems of children are lessened both at school and at home, the culture of teaching and learning is restored and learners get engaged consistently to their learning activities. In this study, the literature reviewed was primarily journal articles, mostly derived from Sabinet, a South African electronic journal article server. Other literature was found from books and papers read at different conferences, and simply, articles from internet.

The literature reviewed further identified some of the barriers to parents involvement in the education of their children as lack of communication between parents and educators at school, illiteracy of parents, poor English proficiency, lack of child care, inflexible work schedules, lack of income, lack of transportation to participate in school events, lack of confidence in interacting in a culture or language different from their own, low self-esteem of parents arising from the shame of their own educational failure and insufficient home-school collaboration



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(Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Shearer, 2006). Beside these challenges, Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) indicated that schools should build up school-parental perceptions, acknowledge parents cultural values, incorporate the community in the curriculum and invite the extended family members to school activities.

### 5.3.2 Findings with regard to parents' assistance on homework activities

One of the objectives of this research was to inquire into the involvement of parents in rural communities in facilitation of their children's quality education. Results from the study shows that parents do not know what to do concerning their children's homework. Apparently, the problem is worsened by the series of curriculum changes to those who are literate. The empirical study also revealed that some parents who are literate enough do not monitor homework of their children every day. In addition, parents do not reserve a place and time for their children to work on their homework on a regular daily basis. To confirm parents' reluctance, Participant no. 6, a female treasurer, said, "*.....let me be honest with you, I can read well that's why they have co-opted me here as a treasurer, and I have two grandchildren here, but I have never bothered to see what are they writing, and when, you understand, and I assume even the other parents, if ever they assist, in terms of percentage I'm telling you I don't think it can be more than 10% parent involvement in home works*". It was also found that there is communication breakdown between parents and teachers, in which case, parents are not able to assistance from teachers on how best they can assist their children in homework.



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### 5.3.3 Findings on parents' general attitude in the educational matters of their children

One of the aims of this study was to assess parents in rural communities' involvement on their children's secondary education. The empirical study found that parents with educational expertise do not render voluntary teaching services, and neither do they offer any career guidance. The study also found that not all parents in the rural communities in Malamulele East Circuit attend community forums to discuss educational matters. Participant no. 8 during the second phase of the study even mentioned "*……the SMT and the SGB should find ways of trying to have a maximum participation by parents on meetings, which start at maximum attendance. But if that fails, ……. the only option left is for the teachers to try and work harder without parents, there's no other way, …….*". The implication from the participant's comment is that the general attitude of most parents in the rural communities in Malamulele East is not positive towards the education of their children.

### 5.3.4 Findings regarding teacher–parents communications

The study also sought to find out the roles that parents in the rural communities in Malamulele East play in facilitating their children's quality education. Since quality education cannot be accomplished with communication, it was imperative in this study to seek the extent to which teachers and parents communicate towards the success of learners. The empirical study revealed that there is no good communication between parents and teachers at school. It was also found that some learners do not stay with their parents, however, teachers still do not have a healthy communication with parents who are available. Participant no. 4, a male SGB chairperson remarked that "*the only thing that I can say is that parents and teachers are not walking on the same wavelength, because by the time teachers need parents most, the parents are not there, and by the time parents need teachers to complain about a fail, for example, only a clerk or someone delegated to issue reports will be found, others are not there*". The implication



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behind this comment is that there is no communication between parents and teachers, except scheduled communications that follow prescripts such as reporting of finances.

### 5.3.5 Findings with regard to parents' participation in School Governance

In an effort to develop a model through which parents' involvement in the education of their children can be enhanced, it was also important in this study to establish the participation of parents in governance issues. The empirical study revealed that parents, particularly of learners who come from villages away from the school, do not participate in governance. This saw one SGB member being re-elected into office for more than one term. Participant no. 2 revealed that "*I am in my second term as an SGB chairperson, most parents do not turn up for the elections, and those who come, do not stand for nominations in most cases*". From this comment, it can be concluded that parents in rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit hardly participate in the governance of their respective schools.

## 5.4 SYNTHESIS OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The study sought to investigate contributions made by parents towards better education of their children and found that most parents are away in Gauteng and farms. Some learners head families and have to ensure that their siblings are also ready for school while they prepare themselves. The research has found that there is poor involvement of parents in the Malamulele East Circuit secondary schools. It was also found that parents only respond to invitations regarding disciplinary measures to be taken in case of misconduct by their children.

On the other hand, the study found that most parents in Malamulele East are illiterate, however, those who are literate do not bother themselves to assist their children in homework activities. Shartrand et al.(1997) assert that family



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involvement efforts are most successful when educators and schools assume that all parents/guardians or care-givers of children at schools want what is best for their children and can make important contributions to their children's education.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDED MODEL FOR THE STUDY

Research studies such as those carried out by the Michigan Department of Education (2001), found that lack of parental involvement is the biggest problem facing public schools worldwide. The path that could be followed to improve parents involvement, particularly in rural communities should be started earlier in the child's educational process. The earlier in a child's educational process parents' involvement begins, the more powerful would be the effects. Parents should work directly with their children on learning activities at home. Such practice could be effective, however the study revealed that some parents do not stay with their children, in which case, Shartrand et al. (1997) finds caregivers or guardians suitable for that exercise.

Although most parents might not know how to help their children with their education, with the guidance and support, they may become increasingly involved in home learning activities and find themselves with opportunities to teach, to be role models for and to guide their children. Schools should encourage children to practice reading at home with parents, the children would through that practice, make significant gains in reading achievement compared to those who only practice at school. Parents should read to their children, find books and take trips with their children, guide television watching and provide stimulating experiences in order to improve their children's achievements at school. Families of children in the rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit should establish a daily family routine in which case, times are set in place for studying, doing assignments and being firm about bedtime and having dinner together. A separate quiet place for practicing schools tasks should be established. Parents should monitor out-of-school activities such as setting time limits for television watching, arranging for



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after school activities in a supervised care. Parents should be exemplary to their children in terms of the value for education, self-discipline and hard work, for example, they should communicate through questioning and conversation, demonstrating that achievement comes after hard work.

Parents in rural communities should express high but realistic expectations for achievement, to the best that they can. In so doing, they should set goals and standards that are appropriate for their children's age and maturity. They should also recognise and encourage special talents and even talk with friends about their families' success, thereby also learning from them as they discuss. Parents should maintain a warm and supportive home, showing interest in children's progress at school, helping with homework, discussing the value of a good education and possible career options, staying in touch with teachers and the rest of the school staff. They should also encourage reading, writing and discussions among family members such as reading, listening to children read and talking about what is being read.

## 5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

From what have been sourced out in the literature consulted, survey questionnaires by educators of secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit and face-to-face interviews held with SGB members, it is pertinent to indicate that, all stakeholders favour a kind of partnership where every member of the partnership will participate effectively in the achievement of the goals set for schools. Once there is effective and efficient collaboration among all stakeholders, there is every possibility that teachers will be highly effective and learners would be able to improve in their performance culminating into the excellent results at the end of the school year.



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Although every stakeholder's wish in terms of involvement in the education of our children has been revealed by this study, there are other areas for further study in a similar project still remains. For example, a detailed research study on the role of principals in assisting parents to take sound decisions about education of their children is still required. Ways in which principals could assist parents in their children's education still need to be explored. Strategies that could lead to the involvement of illiterate parents in the education of their children also require descriptive and explorative arguments. The manner on which school principals could communicate effectively with low-income parents requires an in-depth attention. Future studies on a similar research domain may not necessarily be undertaken within the Malamulele East Circuit, but also in the rest of the country, particularly in rural areas where a similar problem of a gap between the schools and parents still exist.

## 5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since the sample size of this study was limited to the Malamulele East Circuit area only, it is not possible to generalise the findings. There is a possibility of finding different results from another Circuit with most schools having parents that are actively involved in the educational matters of their children. However, the findings of this study can be transferable and be the same in other areas with similar contexts. There is also a possibility that some of the educator respondents, during the first phase of the study, might not have read questionnaire items thoroughly, but simply crossed over to provide responses. However, this would not have affected the results significantly, since the results were further strengthened during the second phase (face-to-face) interview sessions of the study.

The study was conducted following adequate subsequent quantitative and qualitative steps and procedures to ensure the validity and reliability. Potential



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biasness was avoided by getting almost full representativity from the eleven secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit, and by adopting a mixed methodology research design to investigate parents in rural communities' involvement in the education of their children in secondary schools. The views and experiences from learners could also be needed especially in the formulation of homework policy to improve learners' educational practices. However, for this study, it was imperative to investigate teachers and parents components of the SGB as representatives of parents who frequently feel that they are unequal and have been disempowered from the partnerships in education.

## 5.8 SUMMARY

This study was conducted to investigate the involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of the children in secondary schools. The findings showed that parents in rural communities in the Malamulele East Circuit are not as involved as would be expected under normal circumstances. In the first chapter, the problem was stated and the aims of the study were also spelt out. A literature review was conducted to establish what parental involvement entails, challenges that comes with parental involvement and the possible measures in a South African context were also presented. In conclusion, the study managed to accomplish its stated aims and answered all the research questions stated in Chapter one.



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PERMISION LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH *ANNEXURE* A

P.O. Box 352
SASELAMANI
0928
23 February 2011

The Circuit Manager
Private Bag X9259
Malamulele East Circuit
SASELAMANI
0928

Dear Sir

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT**

I hereby request your permission to conduct an educational research project from all secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit.

The title of my dissertation is "***The involvement of parents in rural communities in the education of their children in secondary schools.***"

Kindly assist in completing the inventory which will serve during the sampling process in the schools. The results of this study along with recommendations will be made available to the circuit on request. In the process, I promise not to disturb teaching and learning activities, but to make use of the most convenient time as possible.

Hope to receive your favourable reply to carry out the project.

Yours sincerely

_____

Mr. BALOYI RT
078 828 6168



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*ANNEXURE* B

# DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER TO THE MALAMULELE EAST CIRCUIT MANAGER

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REF: 81008805
ENQ: M.S. Matibe

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
VHEMBE DISTRICT

The Circuit Manager
Malamulele East Circuit
Private Bag x9259
SASELAMANI
0928

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
VHEMBE DISTRICT
2011 -03- 23
PRIVATE BAG X2250, SIBASA 0970
TEL. 015 962 1313/6
LIMPOPO PROVINCE

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT: BALOYI R.T**

1. The above matter has reference to your covering minute dated 23 February 2011.

2. Attached hereto find our letter of approval i.r.o. the request by Baloyi R.T. for permission to conduct research Project in your Circuit.

3. Kindly assist Mr.Baloyi R.T. by completing the inventory which is also attached.

4. Your cooperation is always appreciated.

DISTRICT SENIOR MANAGER

28/03/2011
DATE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MALAMULELE EAST CIRCUIT
2011 -04- 12
PRIVATE BAG X9259
SASELAMANI, 0952
LIMPOPO PROVINCE



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LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
# EDUCATION
## VHEMBE DISTRICT

REF: 14/7/R
ENQ: M.S.MATIBE

Mr. Baloyi R.T.
P.O.BoX 352
SASELAMANI
0928

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
VHEMBE DISTRICT
2011-03- 23
PRIVATE BAG X2250 SIBASA 0970
TEL. 015 962 1313/4
LIMPOPO PROVINCE

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

1. The above matter bears reference

.2.Your request for permission to conduct research **on" The involvement of parents in poor rural communities in the education of their children at secondary schools"** in Malamulele East circuit has been approved.

3. You are kindly requested to observe the following conditions:

3.1. Inform the Circuit Managers and principals of the affected schools prior to your visits.

3.2. Ensure that your interactions with teachers during interviews and the administration of questionnaires does not disrupt teaching and learning activities as promised in your letter of request.

3.3. The study should be conducted during the first three terms of the school calendar as they will be preparing for the end of the year examination during the fourth term.

4. Wishing you the best in your academic pursuit.

DISTRICT SENIOR MANAGER

23/03/2011
DATE



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*ANNEXURE* D

**MALAMULELE EAST SECONDARY SCHOOLS POPULATION STATISTICS 2011**

| no | name of school | no of educators | enrolment | rural primary feeder villages* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Dlamani | 28 | 770 | Nyavani<br>Basani |
| 2 | Gidjana | 35 | 856 | Nghomunghomu<br>Magona<br>Mashobye |
| 3 | Govhu | 19 | 336 | Govhu |
| 4 | Jilongo | 11 | 533 | Jilongo |
| 5 | Madonsi | 10 | 214 | Gijamhandeni<br>Phugwani |
| 6 | Matimba | 21 | 601 | Saselamani (part of)<br>Nkavele<br>Ntlhaveni Block D<br>Ntlhaveni Block C (part of) |
| 7 | Mtititi | 33 | 642 | Lombard<br>Plange<br>Altein |
| 8 | Nghezimani | 32 | 770 | Nkovani<br>Nghezimani<br>Hlengani (part of) |
| 9 | Ntlhaveni | 24 | 570 | Ntlhaveni Block C<br>Ntlhaveni Block G, ka-Bevhula |
| 10 | Peninghotsa | 07 | 159 | Peninghotsa |
| 11 | Shitlhangoma | 22 | 386 | Merve<br>Mabayeni |
| **TOTAL** | | **239 educators** | **5837 learners** | **24 no. of relatively poor rural villages** |

* Rural primary feeder villages:refers to the main rural villages from where learners come at each of the eleven secondary schools. (*DataReceived from Malamulele EastCircuit Office, Vhembe District – Limpopo Department of Education on March 14, 2011).*



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*ANNEXURE* **E**

P.O. Box 352
SASELAMANI
0928

Dear Sir/Madam

I am studying at the University of Venda. I am interested in finding out about the extent to which parents in rural communities are involved in the education of their children in secondary schools.

I should be most grateful if you would help me with this part of my research project by completing the inventory.

May I assure you that the survey is anonymous and is designed mainly to obtain an overall statistical picture.

In anticipation, please accept my sincere appreciation for your willingness to assist me.

Yours sincerely

Baloyi RT
078 828 6168



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# RURAL COMMUNITY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT - QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this study is to find out the extent to which parents in rural communities are involved in the education of their children in secondary schools. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on your perceptions about parents' involvement in the education of their children. For each of the following statements place an **X** in the box that applies to you.

## SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

1. Gender

| | |
|---|---|
| Male | 1 |
| Female | 2 |

2. Age

| | |
|---|---|
| Less than 30 years | 1 |
| 31 – 40 years | 2 |
| 41 – 50 years | 3 |
| 51 – 60 years | 4 |
| 61 years and older | 5 |

3. Teaching experience

| | |
|---|---|
| 0 – 10 years | 1 |
| 11 – 20 years | 2 |
| 21 – 30 years | 3 |
| 31 – 40 years | 4 |
| 41 – 50 years | 5 |
| 51 years and above | 6 |

4. Educational Qualification

| | |
|---|---|
| Any Teachers' Diploma | 1 |
| First Degree | 2 |
| Honours Degree | 3 |
| Masters Degree | 4 |
| Doctoral Degree | 5 |



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## SECTION B: PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

| Item no | THE EXTENT OF PARENTS' ASSISTANCE ON THEIR CHILDREN'S HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES | Place an X in the box that applies to you | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | Parents assist their children with homework activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | Parents' involvement in our school's activities improves learners' academic performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | Parents learn how to assist their children with school related activities from teachers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | Parents check the class activities of their children and sign. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | Parents are willing to assist in the school's activities when requested. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | Parents help in searching for information as required by their homework activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11 | Parents always find time to complete their children's homework. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Item no | PARENTS' GENERAL ATTITUDE IN THE EDUCATIONAL MATTERS OF THEIR CHILDREN | Place an X in the box that applies to you | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 12 | Parents volunteer in cleaning school premises. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13 | Parents with expertise volunteer to teach when need arises. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14 | Parents with expertise volunteer to render career guidance in the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15 | Parents are members in community forums that discuss school related matters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



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| Item no | PARENTS' COMMUNICATIONS WITH TEACHERS | Place an X in the box that applies to you | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 16 | Parents and educators work together to achieve shared goals of learners' academic achievement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17 | Parents discuss their children's educational issues with teachers after school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18 | Parents attend parents meetings with the school staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19 | Parents regularly attend meetings on their children's academic activities at school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20 | Parents regularly enquire about their children's level of achievement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21 | Parents communicate with teachers through letters about their children's academic activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22 | Parents attend all school meetings when invited. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Item no | PARENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES TOWARDS IMPROVED CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE | Place an X in the box that applies to you | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 23 | Parents are part of the schools' development policy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24 | Parents are members in the Governing Body of the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25 | Parents are part of community forums for school related matters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26 | Parents contribute for their children's educational trips | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27 | Parents are also members in schools' career exhibition committee | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28 | Parents are members of the learners' disciplinary committee. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29 | Parents monitor the behaviour of their children on school related activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



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| Item no | PARENTS' GENERAL ATTITUDE IN OTHER EDUCATIONAL MATTERS OF THEIR CHILDREN | Place an X in the box that applies to you | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 30 | Parents attendance annual meetings to collect their children's reports. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31 | Parents strive to find resources to assist their children in learning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32 | Parents ensure that their children are punctual to school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33 | Parents participate in fundraising activities of the school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

***Thank you very much for your time and contribution.***



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## PARENTS' LETTER OF CONSENT

*ANNEXURE* F

## LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Parent

I am a Master of Education (M Ed) student undertaking empirical research as a prerequisite for my studies. My area of research is the involvement of parents in rural areas in the education of their children in secondary schools. I am required to undertake research at different schools/homes in order to complete my studies. I therefore humbly request to be granted permission to visit your school/home in order to collect the data that is required for this research.

The interview will not be more than one hour and will be conducted at a time which will be convenient to you. I will require your contact details so I can notify you of my arrival should you agree to my request. I promise to be ethical in my approach to this research. The results will be reported anonymously and your personal details will be kept confidential. Neither you nor your school will be named in this investigation. In addition, participation in this research will be voluntary and no one will be coerced into saying what is uncomfortable.

I will appreciate it if my request can receive a favourable answer from you and I wish to thank you in advance.

Yours Sincerely

_____ _____

Mr. Baloyi Risimati Thomas Date

## CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to assist Mr. Baloyi R.T. in his research. I understand that he will be:

- Investigating the extent to which parents are involved in the education of their children in secondary schools around our rural area.
- Interviewing me on my perspectives about parents' involvement and tape-recording the interview for later transcription and use in the research report.

Signed: _____ Date: _____



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## PARENTS FACE-TO-FACE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

*ANNEXURE* G

### INTRODUCTION

This data collection procedure was preceded by an introduction of myself, followed by a comprehensive explanation of the purpose of our meeting. The importance of free participation and contribution was also highlighted. The main objective was to talk with a number of SGB members (parents' components) from rural communities whose children attend their secondary school in the Malamulele East Circuit area, about their perceptions and experiences of involvement and support in their children's academic education. The findings may be useful by serving as a resource for training in-service teachers and parents on how to support each other for the benefit of learners' academic growth not only in Malamulele East Circuit area, but also in the rest of South Africa where similar situations prevail. I asked for participants' consent to participate in the study and for interviews to be recorded. I promised the participants confidentiality and anonymity and further indicated that a copy of the interview transcript may be available for them if they so deem necessary.

### THE INTERVIEW QUESTION

A face-to-face in-depth interview was held with 08 selected parents from Malamulele East Circuit whereby the probing question for the extent to which parents in the Malamulele East are involved in the education of their children was:

**How are you as parents involved in the education of your children?**

At the end, a vote of thanks was passed on each of the 08 participants for contributions made regarding their involvement in the education of their children in Malamulele East Circuit.



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**Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?**

**Participant no. 1 SGB Chairperson – Matimba High School**

Eish!, our involvement with Matimba High School is minimal. We are rarely invited to school to discuss any issue related to learner performance. The only time you find a parent at school is when there is a case against that parent's child. I think it is not fair, because the Principal only wait for the bad moment, that is when he will invite a parent to school. Otherwise, the other times that we as SGB are invited to school, is when there are money issues such as reporting, which I think they are bound to call us on meetings of that nature by law. Otherwise I don't understand what kind of a school would it be without citizens being part of it.

***Chairperson, I heard you mention the words "learner performance", but are parents generally checking the performance of their children at home regularly?***

Eish! Teacher, you see what, most of these learners don't listen to start with. Most again don't live with their parents, instead they are head of families since parents are away seeking for job opportunities in Johannesburg. Others are at ZZ2, so teacher you can see what kind of learners we are talking about here. The few parents who are available (*thinking*) are illiterate (*thinking again*) and some are not concerned or are just ignorant about their children's education, especially those who have a "little light" on what is the importance of education. In short, there is too little assistance, if any for the better performance of the children.

***But chairperson, do the learners try to show their parents (I mean those who are available) their home works so that they may get assistance?***

As I said teacher, the few parents who are available are less concerned, and then the children in turn seldom show their parents what is actually happening at school, so that makes matters worse teacher.

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***What about late coming chairperson, are parents who are available concerned that their children reach school in time?***

I would say that the few parents who are available encourage their children to come early to school, because I have observed several cars that are taking these children to school every morning and again back home in the afternoon. The understanding is that, parents are paying these organised cars for transport purposes. But I wouldn't mention that there is 100% punctuality in this school because there are still others who come late and stay outside the gate, because teachers have decided to lock off learners who come late to school.

***But chairperson, were you part of that decision?***

Aah teacher,..... (silent a bit).....no. We just find the learners locked outside and when we ask them why are they outside, their reply is simply...."teachers chase us away". They don't tell the truth these kids teacher. You only get the truth from the teachers, but who on the other hand have taken the decision of locking the learners outside alone. But the teachers allege that we don't come to school when we are invited to take decisions that bind our children.

***But chairperson, do you regularly attend meetings?***

Noooooo teacher, you see what, I wouldn't say that we don't come when invited as parents, what I can say is that these teachers like to take decisions without parents in most cases. Or maybe they undermine us, or maybe they have realised that most of the learners stay alone at home because their parents are at Johannesburg for work, they only come back during December. But some of us come to school for meetings, that is why ....you see I got elected as SGB chairperson here in 2009, and I still continue to come on meetings, when invited.



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***In conclusion Mr. Chairperson, what do you think can be done to improve the performance of our children in terms of getting involved in their education as parents?***

Teacher, that question is tough for me as a parent because I expect teachers to find ways of improving learners performance, whether with us or without us, and if it is a must that parents should always be close by, then that will be a big problem because they cannot live jobs and come back to face this challenge here at home.

***Thank you Mr. Chairperson.***

Thanks teacher.

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**Participant no. 2 SGB Chairperson – Nghezimani High School**

***Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?***

Here in this school – teacher, the relationship of us as parents and teachers is not good. But one other reason which is common is that most parents are working in Gauteng. This causes problems when teachers have to engage parents in the education of their children in this area. In fact, the state of things educationally here in Nghezimani is that parents have left everything at the hands of teachers. The only time you will see a parent at school is when the child has committed an offence, and this does not always happen. Sometimes parents are invited to school in order to solve a certain issues regarding a child, but still you find that the parent do not turn up to the invitation. Actually and to be honest with you teacher, there is a gap between parents and the school here.



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***But what about if a child's performance is unsatisfactory, are parents not worried about that chairperson?***

Mmmmmm you see Mr. Baloyi, our people always wait for bad things to happen, that is when you will see them getting in, I mean in most cases when teachers invite parents to discuss their children's performance, it is rare for them to turn up to the invitation, but some do come. Furthermore, there are those parents who wait until the child has failed at the end of the year, then you will see them coming to complain that heeeeey ....these teachers don't teach.....teachers are always drunk.....and many more stories. Other cases leaves many unanswered questions, because you realise that this learner collects a report by himself/herself, no worrying parent to come and collect....to see the performance of his/her child. I am in my second term as an SGB chairperson, most parents do not turn up for the elections, and those who come, do not stand for nominations in most cases.

***But do teachers invite parents to discuss a child's issue?***

Yaaaaa, you see Mr. Baloyi, the mistake that teachers do is that in most cases they wait for a child's mistake, that is when a letter shall be issued to invite a parent, and to make matters worse, this letter is given the culprit (the child) who is being charged, and that result in communication breakdown, because no one can be a warrant officer against himself....(*laughing*). I think teachers should invite parents to discuss not only the child's behaviour, but also the child's performance and how it can be improved, to me that is what is more important. But at the same time Mr. Baloyi, the challenge is, like I told you earlier, most of the children's parents in this school are working in Johannesburg, they only come back home during December times for Christmas, so I think teachers should find a better way to teach effectively without parents.



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***But Chairperson, how about parents making use of guardians when they are in Jo'burg?***

Aah! Mr. Baloyi, you don't know these children, do you think they can be able to respect and listen to anyone else beside their own parents, some don't even listen to their parents. Another thing Mr. Baloyi, these children, most of them own homes, they are heads of the families where they live, sometimes you find a teenager representing a fellow teenager on disciplinary hearings.

***Fine Mr. Chairperson, but are there some community members who are well educated, do they assist these children although they are not their children of blood?***

Hmmmmmm, you know Mr. Baloyi that we Africans are mostly jealousy, we do have good educated people around, but it is rare to find them even participating in school meetings. Perhaps it is because they took their children to private schools, so they are not worried about whatever happens in the community public school.

***Do you have anything else to add Mr. Chairperson?***

Mmmmm, Mr. Baloyi, the only thing that I can say is that parents and teachers are not walking on the same wavelength, because by the time teachers need parents most, the parents are not there, and by the time parents need teachers to complain about a fail, for example, only a clerk or someone delegated to issue reports will be found, others are not there. In short, teachers just have to find ways to deal with this difficult situation, as SGB chairperson, I can see but nothing I can do because you will understand Mr. Baloyi, these parents have to go and seek jobs.

***Thank you Mr. Chairperson for your views.***

Thank you Mr. Baloyi

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**Participant no. 3 SGB Chairperson – Ntlhaveni High School**

***Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?***

Thanks Mister for giving me time to explain what is happening here in Ntlhaveni Block C with regard to parents' involvement to their children's education. Hmmmmm, to be honest with you Mr. Baloyi, parental involvement is toooo little. We as parents have a bad relationship with the school as a whole, I suspect it is because most parents are unemployed. There is no employment. You find that a person takes a very long time to come to school if called perhaps to pay for money of a function. Such things in one way or another disturbs the smooth running of the school. Again Mr. Baloyi, most of the children stay with their grandmothers whom they do not respect, their parents are staying in Gauteng.

***Hoockey Mr. Chairperson, but are the parents concerned about the performance of their children even if they are not permanently at home?***

Yaaaa Mr. Baloyi, I remember another case before I became the chairperson of the SGB, a certain parent, during December went to the home of a teacher, allegedly indicating that the teacher failed his child. It is very much disturbing because throughout the year, that parent was not at home, there was no support in terms of home works. That child was not even monitored because she was the family head herself. You know Mr. Baloyi sometimes "magayisa" will trouble you because most of them do not listen to the other side of the story.

***What is the general level of support and monitoring of children by parents here in Block C?***

Although Mr. Baloyi, I have never checked the work of my own granddaughter, I want to believe that even the other community members do not generally check the home works of their children. But Mr. Baloyi get me well here, because there are some who I suspect they might be checking the works of their children, especially these lady teachers. Otherwise, sorry Mr. Baloyi, no support, because I told you, most of these children do not stay with their parents, and few who stay with their parents, you find that those parents are illiterate that they are unable to contribute in home works for better performance of those children.



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***Now under these circumstances Mr. Chairperson, what do you think should be done to improve learner performance in your school as an SGB?***

Heish! Mr. Baloyi, this question is difficult for me, but to try it, I think teachers should work hard to ensure that all learners do better in classes. This perhaps can be achieved by giving learners more home works, which are not monitored at home in any way, but if teachers can try to mark these home works honestly on the next day, an improvement can be achieved. But Mr. Baloyi, the challenge that we have received from the management as an SGB, is that classes are overcrowded that teachers are unable to work on these learners individually, sooo ....eish, may be the Department should establish more classes and more teachers, I don't know Mr. Baloyi.

***Good idea Mr. Chairperson, do you have anything else to comment?***

My last comment is that teachers should not get tired to teach and help our community, they need to device ways which at the end shall bear fruits even if they pull hard without any support from the parents of their learners, because at the end, they are judged based on the results they produced, and at that stage, the Department do not listen that there was no parental support in the middle of the year..sooo Mr. Baloyi just work hard what else can we do? But I think parents who are away from home because of different reasons, must ensure that their children back home have a reliable guardian who command respect from these children.

***Thank you very much Mr. Chairperson for your contributions.***

You are welcome Mr. Baloyi, I'm happy at least I got someone to discuss issues of this nature, maybe the results can take us somewhere.

***Let's hope so Mr. Chairperson thanks once more.***

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***Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?***

Welcome Mr. Baloyi, mmmmmm to start, allow me to say that in this school, we have a good relationship with parents, although you rarely see a parent in the school.

***So how can you say the relationship is good despite parents often coming to school?***

When parents are invited to annual general meetings at this school, they do attend, and they contribute effectively, we take resolutions and recommendations and forward them to the School Management Team. For example, Mr. Baloyi, at this school, there is little late coming, despite the fact that this school does not have a scholar transport system, we only have the National School Nutrition Programme running well, so it also help us in truancy because our children attend classes without complaining of hunger, which could lead to truancy. Surely Mr. Baloyi our school is good. Oh, I earlier mentioned that parents do not often come here, because even today, look at that one Mr. Baloyi (*pointing a finger*) she is not alone, there are others that other side, coming to clean, so you can see we are organised here (*laughing*).

***Organised, very good, but what about learner performance is it good here Mr. Chairperson?***

To the best of my knowledge Mr. Baloyi, it is good. Because we have never experienced severe complaints from the other parents, the only complaints that I heard was received by the management, was from one parent in 2009 who did not even attend our meetings, but her complain was about her child coming back home late in the afternoon, and coming to school early at five o'clock, and that we agreed here, so I think she suspected her child was telling her lies, because we clarified her, and never came back again.



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***Hoockey, so it was an issue of morning and afternoon studies?***

Exactly Mr. Baloyi, we took a resolution as parents and the School Management Team that let the school starts at 06H30 and knock off at 16H00, that helped us and the school as well, because our children are generally performing well.

***Generally, the attitude of parents in this community towards learning of their children is good Mr. Chairperson, isn't it?***

It is absolutely good.

***Do parents assist their children in doing their homework?***

You see now Mr. Baloyi, you are going somewhere else, let me tell you, most of the parents whose children attend school here are not educated, but they understand what education means to them and their children. Although they do not actually assist, they are supportive, you realise that because of their commitment whenever they are needed at school. They are supportive, I can confirm Mr. Baloyi that most parents are concerned when they see their children playing during the evening rather than doing school work or studying. In this community we organise community meetings from which decisions that deal with child care at home are taken, in terms of supporting them towards better performance in their studies.

***Quite understandable Mr. Chairperson, what else can you add, Mr. Chairperson?***

I nearly forgot to tell you that we have challenges because some children do not have parents, some have lost their parents due to HIV and AIDS and you see, it is difficult to handle them when they misbehave, but at least we are working on involving Social Workers in that regard because it's just two cases.

***Thanks Mr. Chairperson***

You are welcomed Mr. Baloyi

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**Participant no. 5 SGB Treasurer – Nghezimani High School**

***Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?***

Thanks Mr. Baloyi to give me this opportunity to speak with you about our relationship with the school as a community and parents. Mmmmmmm, except those of us who are in the SGB's committee, I would not say that parents here in Nghezimani, Makhasa and Nkovani Villages are much involved in the school activities to promote learning of our children. Why do I say so, is because the few of us who attend meetings, either we are in the SGB executive Committee or with some friends of us who are in the committee, and just a portion of the majority of parents. I'm trying to say that very few parents dedicate themselves to school activities Mr. Baloyi.

***But Mam. Treasurer, let's talk particularly in terms of parents involvement in the learners' class activities, are they involved according to your view?***

Hockey Mr. Baloyi, I thought in that way I'm also answering this question, because I don't think we can say these parents are more concerned with the children's classroom activities, yet they don't turn up when called to attend certain school activities. According to me Mr. Baloyi, most of us are not doing anything to assist our children in terms of what they do in the classroom. But I think this is because most children do not stay with their parents at their homes, some don't even have parents, some have their parents out in Gauteng for work related reasons. Some do have parents, but these parents are illiterate that they cannot do anything like helping in home works. Some parents who literate enough do help, but some are lazy to be honest with you Mr. Baloyi and leave everything in the hands of teachers.

***Hmmm, you mentioned several points Mam. Treasurer, but, tell me, although they cannot write, some parents, do they encourage their children to do school work at home, I mean according to your understanding?***

Sir, like I said earlier, these parents, most of them or let me say most of us Mr. Baloyi, we are lazy, we are ignorant, some of us don't even care when our child come back late from school, we don't know whether she was at school or with boyfriends, and some of us don't even bother to ask.



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***Hockey, let's check with the other side, but are regularly invited to school by teachers, Mam. Treasurer?***

Aaah!, yaaaa but in most cases whenever a parent is invited to school is when there is a case against his/her child. And still you find that the parent concerned is not available, or the boss in the work place of that particular parent does not allow the parent to leave her/his job to attend school matters. But beside that Mr. Baloyi there are finance report meetings, most of the people who attend meetings are the executive committee members, maybe because there is a plate after the meeting (*laughing*).

***What about parents' meetings to discuss learner performance in general?***

Definitely, Mr. Baloyi, we have never been invited to school as parents to discuss those important issues, what is common is to complain after our children have failed at the end of the year, and to point at teachers with fingers that they don't teach, such stories are common Mr. Baloyi. But we never have meetings on learner performance.

***But would you say you would attend if invited, Mam.Treasurer?***

Eish!, I'm not sure because as I mentioned earlier, most of the parents do not stay with their children here at home, but there are few parents who are sort of touched by a call from school about any school related matter, whereas many don't care, or are not available, or some are just unable.

***What can you mention further, Mam. Treasurer?***

I thought you will ask me am I not eating school funds (*laughing*) as a treasurer, and I wanted to say ask the Principal because my main role is just to sign the cheques, it is hard to sit and plan finance matters this side, we only meet to comply with the policy and seemingly just to fulfil.

***Hay Mam. Treasurer, our area of focus for now was with you, the school, your child and the performance of your child, maybe are you proposing that I come next time investing financial management of the school (laughing)?***

Yes (*laughing too*).



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***But finally, what do you think should be done to improve parents involvement in their children's school activities, to enhance the children's performance?***

Hey, this is a tough one for me, Mr. Baloyi, but maybe teachers should just work hard, because, isn't it that I'm telling you, most children do not live with their parents, and those who live with guardians, have either ignorant guardians or ignorant parents, sooooo let the management of the school work hard to fight better results, that's all what I can say Mr. Baloyi.

***Thanks very much for your contribution and time, Mam. Treasurer***

Thanks Mr. Baloyi, but when are you coming for questions about finance management?

***I don't want to deceive you, the area of focus for now is on your involvement in the school activities of your children as parents.***

Thanks anyway Mr. Baloyi

***Thank you once more.***

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**Participant no. 6 SGB Treasurer – Matimba High School**

***Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?***

Thanks Mr. Baloyi for this opportunity, already we greeted one another outside, I am happy you asked this question, I want to answer you in the best possible way that I can. Mmmmm, here at Nkavele, we have children from Ntlhaveni Block D, Mahlohlwani, some from Block C and of course the majority is from here at Nkavele (Ntlhaveni Block A). Soooo whenever a parent meeting is called by the Principal, you will find that the majority of parents who come are from the nearby village. Let me confirm to you that I have never seen a parent from the other villages except Nkavele, and the parents from Nkavele here nearby only come here because they suspect there is a possibility of employment when they come, they don't think about anything else in terms of contribution towards better performance of their children. I'm telling you Mr. Baloyi even the Principal knows this, they come only when they are coming for a piece job opportunity, and you will see them with their ID[s].



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***Madam, but are you regularly invited to school about your children's performance as parents?***

Mr. Baloyi, in most cases when a parent is called to the school, knows that there is an issue regarding your child...I mean an issue of disciplinary nature. We never meet to discuss how we can contribute as parents towards the improvement of the performance of our children. Now what comes to our minds as parents is maybe the teachers don't have any problem despite that of a disciplinary nature where you will find a parent being invited alone to face the "music" (laughing).

***Mam, you mentioned an important issue here, that of improving learner performance, but, tell me, do you think as individual parents you are doing enough to assist your children at home with school work of your child daily?***

Nooooo Mr. Baloyi, but because of a number of factors, I think parents can't handle home works. Because to start with Mr. Baloyi, you know and I know you are from Mahlohlwani, a poor rural village where most of the parents, not all, cannot read, so how do you expect them to assist Mr. Baloyi, tell me. And another thing, you see as parents we have to see to it that there is something on the table at the end of the day. So even calling me to school is time wasting for most of us we are self-employed, you know Mr. Baloyi, we sell tomatoes in the market, our husbands are out in Jo'burg, some don't even communicate with us back home, those who communicate with us don't talk about school. But not all at the same time Mr. Baloyi, some are concerned about school activities.

***Hockey – be specific Mam. you mentioned a lot of stories, but do regularly communicate with the school as parents?***

Aaaaah, the only communication which is normal is teachers do report quarterly, but generally, the performance is very bad, to be honest with you Mr. Baloyi. Again let me tell you that the Management has never organised a meeting with parents from which parents can deliberate on what can be done to improve the performance of the children. I know this because I'm the treasurer here, and normally we invite parents only in the Budget meeting and financial reports and you find that only SGB executive members turn up in most cases, and a few other parents. Aah! It's a shame Mr. Baloyi, go and tell those



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who sent you here that parents in our schools are a distant from the school activities eish it's boring you know.

***Mam. Treasure, but tell me, parents who can read well, do they assist their children with homework?***

Thomas, let me be honest with you, I can read well that's why they have co-opted me here as a treasurer, and I have two grandchildren here, but I have never bothered to see what are they writing, and when, you understand, and I assume even the other parents, if ever they assist, in terms of percentage I'm telling you I don't think it can be more than 10% parent involvement in home works. Seemingly you want to expose us with your questions, Mr. Baloyi. (Pardon me for calling you Thomas earlier).

***No problem Mam, but what can be done to improve the attitude of parents towards getting involved in their children's education?***

I think it's not difficult, perhaps we should initiate this as SGB, and ensure that every parent come to school one day to discuss this issue. But the conflict Mr. Baloyi is that most parents are away for employment reasons. Most of these learners are head of their respective families and some are permanently head of families because they don't have parents I hope you understand Thom...ah! Mr. Baloyi. To win the attitude of those who are available, I think is simple, but the it's rare for the principal to invite a meeting for parents to discuss learner performance, never Mr. Baloyi, I'm not sure maybe it's because there is also a lot of school work that other side for the teachers and the management, but what is a problem is the reports generally show very bad performance of our children.

***Anything else to comment Mam.***

I think the Management, SGB should sit together and agree on inviting parents to sort of give them a workshop on what is expected of them from teachers and what teachers expect from them, by so doing all of us can be onboard.

***Hmm, thanks very much Mam. excellent contribution.***

Thanks Mr. Baloyi, by the way you are doing Masters....Thanks.

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**Participant no. 7 SGB Treasurer – Dlamani High School**

***Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?***

Thanks Mr. Baloyi for this time to share with you the relationship that we have with Dlamani here at Nyavani. First I wish to indicate to you that our school has learners from different villages but the majority are from Nyavani and Basani. Our involvement as parents in school activities is difficult, I mean we hardly attend meetings for example. In most cases, only parents of children who stay nearby do attend school meetings, but parents of those children who use transport to come to school, rarely come to the meetings. Again, even parents from nearby villages, most are ignorant that they don't turn up, yet they complain when their children fail at the end of the year. But mostly they don't even bring their complain to school, apparently they don't even know where to start.

***Madam, you mentioned ...meetings and fail of learners at the end of the year, which is not good, tell me, but are you invited to meetings by the school regularly?***

Eish!, yaaa, you know....the only times that the school invites us is when there is an issue to be discussed, but not related to learners' general performance. For example, as a Finance Committee Chairperson and the Treasure of the SGB/School, I am regularly invited and I am bound to come because for example I am responsible for the signing of all school cheques but with the secretary and the Deputy- Chairperson (of SGB). There has never been a meeting which is convened to discuss general learner performance or what as parents should do at home to assist the learners.

***You mention again, assisting learners at home....with school work, but do parents according to your view assist their children at home with school work?***

Most of the learners Mr. Baloyi are not staying with their parents around, some are owners of families, some have both their parents staying in Jo'burg and farms due to work related reasons, some stay with their parents but their parent – child relationship is not good because of the child's bad behaviour claiming that they have rights. You know Mr. Baloyi there are a lot of challenges but, those challenges don't mean that there are no parents at all who assist their children, they are there, but they are few. In short teachers are working very hard here to try get something out of the little support that they have,



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fortunately, we have few cases of dis[illegible]at despite these learners some of them staying alone, to a certain extent when it comes to school matters they are disciplined.

***Hey, Mam. Treasurer, lot of stories of course, but tell me here, are you invited to come and collect your children's progress reports at the end of each quarter.***

You see Mr. Baloyi during the first quarter, the Principal invites all parents to a meeting of Financial report before March, at that meeting the Principal do take a slot to pass some general remarks before getting in the financial statements business, so he usually indicate there that only parents or guardians should come to collect reports. Unfortunately, those words are remarked just to a handful of parents, the majority don't come, only when they here that there is a possibility for a job, is then that you will see them coming. Going ahead, come the end of the quarter, you will see some irresponsible faked parents coming for reports, some parents are of the same age with learners, then you can see that there is a challenge in terms of the real biological parent. That have led teachers to issue reports straight to the learners themselves because for some learners, particularly those who do not have parents it was becoming a problem. And sometimes you cannot ask where is your father....you understand Mr. Baloyi...sometimes passed away.....sometimes I don't know my father...my mother is in Polokwane working there, such stories. So at the end, reports are given to parents who do turn up, but also given to children who apparently do not have their parents with them at home. Because at the same time, the Departmental Policy says that we cannot deprive a child access to his/her progress record due to any reason.

***But personally Mam. Treasurer, do you assist your children with school work (laughing)***

You see, Mr. Baloyi during our time there was no OBE, so you tell me about OBE I become confused, what I personally do is to encourage my son in Grade 11 to work very hard, I can't go deeper in to the text book.

*Thank you Mam. Treasurer*

Thanks RT



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**Participant no. 8 Treasurer – Ntlhaveni High School**

***Tell me, how are you as parents involved in the education of your children?***

Mr. Baloyi, it is difficult here, you know we live in the rural area where most parents still believe that all is in the hands of teachers with regard to teaching and learning of the children. Even myself Mr. Baloyi, I have never bothered to have a look on the work of my son who is in Grade 10 here at Ntlhaveni High School. But with regard to invitation calls from the school for meetings, most of us do come, but unfortunately, very few participate in meetings. Once we are on meetings some even sleep, some just get silent like they are security forces in army (*laughing*), but at the end, for any presentation given by the Principal, you find them abiding by that resolution. They don't participate, in times of elections for SGB sub-committees, you will find the same people who were elected before in previous terms, taking the office for the third or even fourth term.

***But, Mr. Treasurer is there any form of support towards learner performance improvement that you do as parents generally?***

You see Mr. Baloyi, the only form of support that I can mention is that most parents here do buy study guides when ever their children get advice from the teachers, I have observed this. There are also few cases of late coming, especially since learners from Nghomunghomu make use of the scholar transport facility from the Department. But perhaps to be specific to your question, most of the parents are not that much educated, that they can be able to help their children with school work at home. I believe the only support provided is to encourage these children to dedicate themselves to school work.

***Are parents invited to school to discuss learner performance related matters?***

Nooooo, I'm not sure here, it appears teachers do not have enough time for meetings of that nature, fortunately I am used and closed to the teachers, they are always complaining about CASS, maybe the so-called CASS is too demanding, that it leaves no space for performance meetings, which according to me is very important.



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***Mr. Treasurer, but do parents come to collect their children's reports quarterly?***

Not all of them come to collect reports, some come, most don't come, they believe their children shall collect on their own. Some children simply adopts fake parents along the road to collect on their behalf, I have observed this since I work as a food gardener to supplement what is provided by the National Schools Nutrition Programme. Even myself, you find that some learners approach me during those times to go and the collect the reports on behalf of their parents, actually, very few biological parents ever bother themselves to come and collect. But, some parents come furiously when they find that their learners have failed, it sound ridiculous because when there are home works, on the other hand, they don't assist, I don't think they do that.

***Do parents assist their children in terms of career related matters in this community?***

Mr. Baloyi, yes things are changing day by day, but here we have so many parents who are still uncertain about what they wish their child could be. Most of us we rely on teachers to provide enough career guidance so that at the end of the day, the child will choose on his own and choose accordingly. We still not clear on how best we can advice our children, surely.

***Any other suggestion that parents should do towards better performance by learners?***

Actually, the SMT and the SGB should find ways of trying to have a maximum participation by parents on meetings, which start at maximum attendance. But if that fails, Mr. Baloyi, the only option left is for the teachers to try and work harder without parents, there's no other way, what can they (teachers) do.

***Thanks for your contribution Mr. Treasurer***

Thanks very much too Sir.

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