A CASE STUDY: THE ROLE OF A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AT A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN PORT ELIZABETH

Jacqueline Cloete

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by

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Educationis in the Faculty of Education at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

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SUPERVISOR: DR. CHRISTINA JORDAAN
DECLARATION

I, Jacqueline Cloete, student number 197166090, hereby declare that the dissertation for the degree of Magister Educationis (M.Ed) is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

JACQUELINE CLOETE
DEDICATION

This study is lovingly dedicated to my children Jaren, Jovan and Joshwin, and especially to my husband, Juren. It has been through their encouragement and understanding that I have been able to complete this study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the following persons:

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- Doctor Christina Jordaan, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, for her professional guidance, encouragement and assistance as my supervisor.

- My husband, Juren, for his encouragement as well as my children and my mother for their patience and support.

- To all the participants, for sharing their experiences with me.

- To the principal and the project leader of the volunteering committee at the school in the study for making me feel welcome and allowing me access to conduct research at the school.

- To NMMU Postgraduate Research Scholarship for funding my studies for two years.
ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of parental and community involvement in a primary school and the benefits thereof to the learners, teachers and community members. The aim of this study is to investigate how a positive school climate can improve the involvement of parents and community members in a school’s activities. The research attempted to determine what the role of a positive school climate is; the strategies schools could apply to enhance parental and community involvement, the possible benefits of involvement and reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in school activities.

The theoretical frameworks of Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model and Joyce Epstein’s overlapping spheres of influence were used in the study. A case study was used as the qualitative research methodology. The data for the research was gathered from a purposive sample of teachers, community volunteer workers, parents and the principal. Semi-structured interview schedules and pre-designed questionnaires including open and closed questions, were used to collect data. The data was analysed inductively by using a descriptive open coding method to identify emerging themes.

The findings of the research suggest that a positive school climate to improve parent and community involvement can be created by applying the strategies of effective communication, good working relationships, creating opportunities for involvement, ensuring a healthy and safe environment, formulating a school policy for parent and community involvement, creating a friendly and welcoming atmosphere as well as upholding an ethos of good moral values. The study found that parent and community involvement in a school’s activities offers various benefits to all stakeholders.

KEY TERMS

Parental involvement; community involvement; school governing body (SGB); school climate; school environment; school atmosphere
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Alcoholics Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABET</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMSA</td>
<td>General Motors South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVC</td>
<td>Orphaned and Vulnerable children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parent/Teacher Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACE</td>
<td>South African Council of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SASA</td>
<td>South African School’s Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGB</td>
<td>School Governing Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short messaging services</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>School Management Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Teacher’s Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 1994 national elections, South African schools were run autocratically where the principal of the school made all the decisions relating to governance of the school. The responsibilities of parents were restricted to payment of school fees, attendance of school events and fundraising. Parents were unable to influence the way the school was governed. After the 1994 democratic elections, new legislation was introduced that allow the education system to be more democratic and this impacted greatly on parent involvement in schools. In terms of the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 all public schools in South Africa must have democratically elected School Governing Bodies (SGBs) comprising parents, learners, teachers, non-teaching staff and school principals. This act also stipulates that the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body.

The main aim of this research project is to investigate how a positive school climate can be enhanced and increased through the active involvement of parents and the broader community in the activities of a school. Hornby (2000:1-2) states the following benefits of parental involvement in school activities: “improved student performance; improved teacher morale; improved school climate; increased parental satisfaction with schools; increased self-confidence of parents involved; overall school improvement; improved communication between parents and children; high school attendance and less disruptive behaviour; increased likelihood of completing high school and attending college; a sense of accomplishment for parents and higher parental expectations of children”. Since parental involvement offers so many benefits to parents, learners, teachers, schools and the community, there is no doubt that there is a definite need to increase parental and community involvement in schools.
1.2 BACKGROUND

Eason-Watkin (in Blankstein, 2004:172) states that in many conversations she had with parents and members of the community, they felt that most schools did not want them to participate, nor to be part of the school. Some parents do not feel welcome to be involved in school matters because of the principals and teachers who treat parents as intruders in their school affairs. Blankstein (2004:172) states that the best way to ensure effective parental involvement in the school is to ensure that parents are made to feel welcome in the school. When parents feel welcome and important, they are more eager to be involved in school activities and make an active contribution.

In order to get parents involved in schools, Lezotte and Jacoby (1990:147) state that the atmosphere at the school should be free from threat of physical harm. Parents also should feel a sense of safety and security in the school buildings and surroundings. If they do not feel safe or welcomed they will never express their discomfort or fear; they will simply not attend any activities at the school.

From the above we can derive that both internal and external factors play a role in parents’ decision to get involved in school matters. Parents also need to feel that their contributions are needed and valued and that teachers understand them and their situations.

The reason for choosing the specific topic for the research project is that as a researcher, I am also a teacher who is adversely affected by the non-participation of parents and community members in the school where I teach. The school where I am teaching at faces many challenges and a lack of parent and community involvement is one of the biggest challenges at the school. I want to explore this topic, because I would like to assist the School Management Team (SMT) at the school where I teach in improving the role that can be played by parents and members of the community in the schools’ activities. I also became interested in this topic when I attended an ‘Integrated school development and improvement project’ intended for school leaders and funded by the DG Murray Trust in 2010.
These workshops once again raised the question in my mind about why some schools manage to be successful in their endeavours whilst others struggle. The school where this research was conducted at also formed part of this project. The topic also interests me because as a parent attending school meetings of my biological children, I would like to know and understand the reasons why there is always a poor turnout of parents at these meetings.

The school that will be researched is a primary school situated in the Northern areas of Port Elizabeth. The majority of parents of learners attending this school are unemployed; therefore the school abolished school fees in 2006 and fundraised instead. What is interesting about the school is that it is situated in a suburb characterised by poverty, crime, low-literacy levels and unemployment, but there are a huge number of parents and community members actively participating in school activities on the school premises on a daily basis. The school is well-known for the community projects it runs and has received numerous awards for community involvement. The school has been recognised locally and internationally for the successes of the school especially since the school serves a disadvantaged community. The school’s main purpose is to educate learners but the school also makes available programmes to empower parents and community members with skills. The school is a health promoting school that offers skill-building programmes like welding, brick making, computer literacy, sewing and carpentry for parents and the unemployed community members. The school has the following on its premises: two security houses, a clinic, a counseling centre, a care centre (House of Hope) for orphaned and vulnerable children and two established vegetable gardens. The school also boasts a compliment of eighty-eight volunteers who work on a daily basis in the school, developing their own skills as teacher assistants, day and night security staff, administration assistants, orphaned and vulnerable children volunteers, gardeners, clinic assistants, cleaners and cooks.

All the achievements of the school drew my attention to the school and motivated me to undertake a study of the strategies and plans that the school follows to be successful. The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent it will be possible to implement the successes of the above discussed school in other schools.
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The democratisation of South Africa in 1994 led to the establishment of new national educational laws and policies. These laws compel parents and community members to be involved in education. The South African Schools Act (SASA) no. 84 of 1996 requires by law that parents be democratically elected on the School Governing body. The SGB of a school have very important functions, for instance, according to Section 20(1)(b)(c) of the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996, school governing bodies must formulate, adopt, and submit copies of their constitutions to the Department of Education. Other functions of SGBs include the creation of an environment conducive to teaching and learning, promoting the best interests of the school, ensuring quality education for learners, ensuring safety and security of learners, taking disciplinary action, drawing up of a policy regarding determination of school fees and encouraging stakeholders of the school to render voluntary services to the school. In order for the SGB to perform its functions optimally, it is critical that all stakeholders are on board and involved in school matters.

Researchers such as Lemmer, (2002: 197); Henderson and Berla, (1994: 10), support the idea of teacher-parent co-operation. These researchers believe that it enhances learner improvement at school, learners’ self-esteem, better school attendance and regular completion of homework. When parents are involved in schools, it gives them confidence and improves their self-esteem. They can contribute something meaningful which makes them feel worthwhile especially when they are unemployed. When parents and community members feel free to be involved in the school, it gives them a feeling of ownership and in return they will take responsibility and look after the school. This will undoubtedly relay to a decrease of vandalism, theft and break-ins at the school. According to Swap (1987: 23) parents who are actively involved at school also feel positive about their own abilities to care for learners and they feel more empowered and confident because they understand more of the dynamics of school life. Learners whose parents are involved understand what is required from their children and can assist the child. Being involved in their children’s schooling instills loyalty, pride and a sense of belonging towards the school.
Regardless of efforts to involve parents by government like the introduction of the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 and despite all the benefits parental involvement offers to the child, parent, school and the community, schools still have difficulty in involving parents and community members. The South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 has created an opportunity for parents to be more involved in schools, but in reality, actual parent involvement in South African schools remains weak (Heystek & Louw 1999: 21). Van der Westhuizen and Mosogoe (2001: 190) support this and state that schools grapple with the problem of involving parents in school activities.

In March 2012 the election of new School Governing Body (SGB) members took place at schools nationally. Schools once again struggled to get parents to nominate themselves or other parents on the SGB. Parents cited reasons like they do not know the other parents as reported in The Witness dated February 2012. The poor participation for the SGB elections even spurred political party leaders like the Democratic Alliance Party’s Helen Zille, to personally make an appeal to parents and to encourage them to be active in schools.

This research problem will be worthwhile researching because a positive school climate may assist schools: (i) to increase parent and community involvement, (ii) result in improved relationships between the school, parents and the community, (iii) lead to a safe and healthy school environment, (iv) provide support facilities to families, (v) make the school more empathetic to the community which the school serves, (vi) minimise disciplinary problems at school.

The research problem of this study thus is that parents are reluctant to become involved in schools despite various attempts from government and the schools themselves.

### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

Based on the above research problem the following research question and sub-questions were formulated:
The main research problem of this study is:

How can a positive school climate be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school?

The following sub-questions emerged from the main research question:

- Which strategies could be applied to increase parent and community involvement at schools?
- What are the benefits of family and community involvement in schools?
- What are the reasons for non-involvement of parents and the community in school activities?

This research may assist schools to reinforce a positive school climate in order to promote parent and community involvement in schools.

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of this study based on the research question and sub-questions are as follow:

1.5.1 The Aim

The main aim of this research study is to investigate how a positive school climate can be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school.

1.5.2 The objectives of the study are to identify:

- the strategies which can be applied to increase parent and community involvement at schools.
- what the benefits of parent and community involvement in schools are.
- the reasons for non-involvement to parents and the community in school activities.
1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focuses on the role that a positive school climate plays in the improvement of parent and community involvement at a school. A literature review was undertaken based on the ecological systems model of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) as well as Joyce Epstein’s (1990) theory of overlapping spheres of influence on parental involvement. Both these two researchers describe the impact parents and other stakeholders have on their children’s development and the importance of parental involvement in schools. These two theories will be explained in detail in the following section.

According to Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory, children’s development and their scholastic outcomes emerge from the interrelated environments, social contexts or systems. These systems consist of the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem, which all interact with the chronosystem, (Louw & Kail, 2007: 28; Swart & Pettipher, 2007: 9-12).

The various systems are briefly explained below to facilitate understanding of the ecological theory model.

- Microsystems

This system consists of the relationships and interactions between the family, the school and the peer group with whom children are interacting with on a daily basis. This system is characterised by factors such as communication, attitude towards school and family and school climate that have a direct effect on the development of the child. This involves ongoing face-to-face interactions with each person affecting the other (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 10-11; and Donald, Lazarus & Lotwana, 2010: 40).
• **Mesosystems**

According to Swart and Pettipher (2005: 11), the mesosystem refers to the relationship that develops between the microsystems. At this level interaction between the peer group, school and family systems take place. As a result of these groups interacting with each other, each system is modified to a certain degree. An example of this would be children who experience a lack of support at home may receive care and understanding from their peers and/or teachers.

• **Exosystems**

The exosystem refers to the social settings in which the developing learner is not directly involved, but they affect the learner directly (Hook, 2010: 506; Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 11). However, the learner may be influenced by people who have intimate (proximal) relationships with him or her. Decisions made at this level of context often greatly affect the child. The child is not directly involved at this level, but he or she experiences the result of interactions at the parental workplace for example.

• **Macrosystems**

This system involves all major social structures. It also contains the beliefs, values and customs of a culture. The macrosystem is seen as the master model in reference to the patterns of the culture and society, such as the economic, social, educational, legal and political systems, of which the macro-, meso- and exosystem are definite manifestations (Hook, 2010: 506).

• **Chronosystems**

The chronosystem is Bronfenbrenner’s term for the effects that time has on all the mentioned systems (Hook, 2010: 507). This level involves changes over time, not only with regard to individual traits, but to the environment in which the person lives as well.
The relation and impact of this theory on parental and community involvement will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

The theory that will be discussed next is Joyce Epstein’s (1990) theory of overlapping spheres. Epstein uses Bronfenbrenner’s theory of overlapping contexts and creates her own theoretical model where “overlapping spheres of influence” include family, school, community and peer group with the learner as the centre of the overlapping sphere.

Epstein (1990) in Edwards and Alldred (2000: 4) define parental involvement in terms of a classification of types of involvement that pay more explicit attention to home and school as sites in which parental involvement can occur. These types of involvement are:

Type 1: Parenting – Schools should provide parents with parenting skills and make provision for positive home conditions that support children’s learning.
Type 2: Communicating - Schools should communicate with families on a child’s progress and school programmes with school-to-home and home-to-school communication.
Type 3: Volunteering – Schools should provide opportunities for recruiting, training and schedules to involve family volunteers.
Type 4: Learning at home - Schools should involve the family in learning activities at home.
Type 5: Decision making - Schools should include parents in governance and advocacy.
Type 6: Collaborating with community – Schools should coordinate work and resources to include the wider community.

This study will aim to explain the relevance of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory model (1979) and Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres (1990).
These two theories and the relation of the theories on parental and community involvement will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 91) state that the research design provides the overall structure for the procedure that the researcher follows, the data collected and the data analysis conducted by the researcher. The research design will be discussed under the following headings: research paradigm, research approach and research strategy.

1.7.1 Research Paradigm

The paradigm in which the research was done can be described as interpretivistic. According to McFarlane (2000: 27) “the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand and interpret social situations by becoming part of the situation or close to the people involved with them, to listen to them and share their experiences.” This study seeks to listen to the respondents and to share in their experiences in their natural setting and as such is based on an interpretivistic paradigm.

1.7.2 Research Approach

A qualitative research design will be used for this research. In qualitative research, the researcher interacts with the participants and observes them in their own “natural” setting. In doing so, human behaviour is studied to emphasise the significance of the subjects (Maree, 2007: 51). Qualitative researchers aim at obtaining an “insider’s perspective”, in other words, they try to comprehend events in the way in which they are experienced by the respondents (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006: 449). The qualitative research design will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.
1.7.3 Research Strategy

The qualitative strategy that will be used to conduct this research study is a Case study. A case study approach is most effective when a researcher strives towards a comprehensive understanding of how respondents relate and interact with each other in a specific situation. This research will strive towards understanding how school leaders, teachers, parents and community members relate and interact at a local primary school.

Thomas (2009: 115) states that “a Case study involves in-depth research into one case or a small set of cases. The case may be a child, a teacher, a class, a school, a social services department. The aim is to gain a rich, detailed understanding of the case by examining aspects of it in detail”. He states further that we study a case when it in itself is of very special interest and we look for the detail of the interaction in its contexts.

Picciano (2004: 42) defines case study research as describing and interpreting events as they happen in the present. The purpose is to thoroughly examine specific phenomena. Picciano (2004: 43) further describes case studies as a flexible methodology.

The school where this research was conducted at is very interesting and it deserves to be studied because it is unique in some very important respects mentioned in the background section of this dissertation. The intention of this study is not to generalise but rather to understand this specific school (case) in its context. A Case study as a qualitative strategy will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.8 DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004: 197); “observations, interviews, phone calls, personal and official documents, photographs, recordings, drawings, e-mail messages and responses, and informal conversations are all sources of qualitative data.”
In this case study semi-structured interview schedules and pre-designed questionnaires including open and closed questions will be used to gather the data.

The data gathering instruments will be discussed below:

1.8.1 Interviews

Gubrium and Holstein (2003: 21) state that the interviewer coordinates a conversation aimed at obtaining the desired information. In this study semi-structured one-on-one interviewing, also referred to as the in-depth interview, will be used. De Vos (2002: 298) states that at the root of semi-structured interviews is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.

I designed the interview schedule by setting questions to provide data to the research study. I decided what data is required to answer the research questions and put those questions to the respondents to elicit these data. In consultation with my supervisor, I examined the relevance, appropriateness, clarity and validity of each question. On discovering of certain information, I decided to design a questionnaire focusing on themes derived from the initial interviews.

Field and Morse (1994) as cited in De Vos (2002: 295) warn against the following pitfalls in interviewing:

- Interruptions;
- Presenting one’s own perspectives;
- Teaching and preaching; and
- Avoiding awkward questions.

The researcher took great care to avoid the above-mentioned pitfalls during the interviews.
One advantage of interviewing, according to Best and Kahn (2003: 232), is that the interviewer establishes a friendly, secure relationship with the subject, and certain types of confidential information may be obtained that the individual might be reluctant to put in writing, like in questionnaires.

1.8.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaire design and administration is a very important component of a research project. Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 190) provide guidelines for developing a questionnaire that encourage people to be co-operative and give responses that a researcher can use and interpret. These guidelines are: “keep it short; use simple, clear, unambiguous language; check for unwarranted assumptions implicit in your questions; word your questions in ways that do not give clues about preferred or desirable outcomes; check for consistency; determine in advance how you will code the responses; keep the respondent’s task simple; provide clear instructions; give a rationale for any items whose purpose may be unclear; make the questionnaire attractive and professional looking” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 190).

The purpose of setting a questionnaire is to try to gain useful data that is necessary to address research questions.

The questionnaires designed for this study consisted of closed – and open-ended questions and aimed to gather as much detail as possible from the respondents.

1.9 SAMPLE POPULATION

In this case study I used purposeful sampling. The reason for purposeful sampling is because I had to choose those respondents who would be able to give me the information I needed. The sample comprised of five SMT members, five post level one teachers, five parents and five community members. One of the SMT members is the Principal of the School and one of the parents is the Chairperson of the SGB.
The purpose of using these respondents in this study is to represent diverse perspectives on the involvement of family and community members in a particular school.

The reason for this selection is so that the researcher is able to see all the characteristics of the total population in the same relationship that they would be seen if the researcher were to observe the total population (Greenfield, 1996: 128). I considered the maturity level and age of primary school learners in responding to interview questions and therefore did not include learners in the study.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Mouton (2005: 108) states that data analysis involves the breaking up of data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. Walliman (2001: 308) mentions that the researcher would be able to develop new theories or validate existing theories by surrounding him/herself with the data, and then identifying patterns or even inconsistencies. The aim of identifying themes and patterns is to reduce the amount of data and to order the data to facilitate the analysis of the data.

The interviews in this study will be analysed following the inductive analysis strategies. Prior to data analysis the researcher must first transcribe all the interviews. The data will be categorised and themes and subthemes will be identified.

I used the eight steps as proposed by Tesch (1990) to analyse the data collected. Tesch (1990:154-156) describes the eight steps of the data-analysis process, as follows:

- The researcher firstly reads through all the transcripts, to make sense of the whole.
- He/she selects then any transcript to read. He/she asks: What is this about?
Then, he/she writes down the possible theme and tries to identify the main themes. This is then repeated until all the transcripts have been read and identified.

- All the emerging themes are listed, and similar themes are grouped together.
- These themes are then abbreviated as codes; and these codes are written next to the appropriate segments of the text.
- The groups of themes are turned into categories, and these categories are grouped together, if necessary, to reduce the list of categories.
- The data belonging to each category are then assembled from the text, to be able to perform an analysis of the categories.

I applied these steps as follow:

- I listened to the recordings and then transcribed the sessions verbatim and read the transcripts to get a sense of the whole;
- I selected all transcripts with the richest information and read through them;
- After repeating this process with all the transcripts, I made a list of all topics and clustered it together and identified major topics.
- I then identified the themes and labelled them from the data;
- I grouped related themes and identified the most descriptive sub-themes and categories accordingly and
- Finally I analysed the data.
The analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews were done manually. In analysing the data, recordings of the interviews were listened to and transcripts of the interviews were read and re-read in order to identify themes and sub-themes which were then interpreted and discussed.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues relates to the moral conduct or misconduct of the researcher. Due to the use of human subjects within the education field, the ethical conduct has to conform to generally accepted norms and values. Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 101) explain that most ethical issues in research fall into one of four categories namely: “protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy, and honesty with professional colleagues.” Struwig and Stead (2001: 66) explain that research ethics provide researchers with a code of moral guidelines on how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way.

In order to collect data from the school being researched I obtained permission from the Department of Education for permission to conduct research at the school. Permission has also been obtained from the principal of the selected school. Ethical clearance from the NMMU Research ethical clearance committee has also been obtained prior to the commencement of the research. This process will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

The respondents were made aware of the fact that they are not obligated to participate in the investigation and not forced to answer any questions that might be uncomfortable to answer. Their participation must be voluntarily. All respondents were assured that the information obtained would be treated confidentially and only be used for the purposes of the study. The respondents were assured that their identity would not be divulged in any way. The researcher also explained to all respondents that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage without any penalty or negative consequences.
1.12 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Researchers have established that a positive school climate may increase parent and community involvement in schools which might lead to the effectiveness of the school. If parents and community members are involved in the education of learners, it offers benefits to the learner, parent, school and the rest of the community. I believe that the starting point to improve parent and community involvement is to improve the school climate at schools.

The findings of the study will be significant in the following ways:

- It will help schools who have not been successful in increasing parent involvement, with more appropriate strategies to attract parent and community members to their schools.
- It will provide possible solutions to conquer reasons offered by parents for their non-involvement in schools.
- It may assist tertiary institutions to include modules on parental involvement in school to students studying to become teachers.
- The Department of Education could use the findings and recommendations to develop training material and provide support to school management teams and school governing bodies.

1.13 PROPOSED DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

This study will be divided into the following chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an overview and a literature overview of the research study. The research question, research design, data collection strategies and proposed analysis of the data are also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review that focuses on the role of the school climate in promoting family and community involvement; explore what strategies a particular school uses to get cooperation from all stakeholders and what the benefits of family and community involvement in schools are. This Chapter will also include the
theoretical framework and theoretical theories that support parental and community involvement.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology of the study. A qualitative research approach was used to collect data. The research design, strategies for data collection and data gathering instruments are the focus of this chapter.

In Chapter 4 the focus is on data collection and data analysis. The data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires are analysed, categorised and discussed.

Chapter 5 contains the findings, recommendations and conclusion.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature study is essential to establish what has been done in a chosen field of study. Struwig and Stead (2001: 38) state that “all researchers need to do a literature study that involves tracing, identifying and analysing documents containing information related to the research problem.”

Mouton (2002: 87) adds to this and states that the literature reviewer looks for definitions, different theories, models and hypotheses, existing data and empirical findings that have been produced by previous research and measuring instruments that have been developed to measure the extent or scope of the subject under investigation. Mouton (2002: 87) continues and says that a literature review represents the first phase of the empirical study; and entails reviewing other authors’ work in your specific field of study. This is done to:

- save time and avoid duplicating an existing study.
- discover what the most recent theories and empirical findings about the subject are.
- identify instrumentation proven to be reliable and valid which could be used in the study.
- identify the most widely accepted definitions of key concepts in the study field.

This study focuses on the significance of creating a positive school climate in enhancing parental involvement in schools, to explain the importance of parental involvement in schools and to explore the reasons for non-involvement of parents in schools. A literature review was undertaken to provide definitions of school climate and parental involvement in education, to investigate the benefits of parental involvement, to analyse the relevance of Bronfenbrenner’s model of ecological
systems and Epstein’s model of overlapping spheres of influence on parental involvement. The theoretical framework of this study is based on the ecological systems model of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Joyce Epstein’s (1990) theory of overlapping spheres of influence in order to understand what impact parents and other stakeholders have on children’s development.

2.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In this section various concepts will be explained to ensure understanding.

2.2.1 Definition - Parents

Van Wyk (2008: 117) states that the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 gives a broad definition of what constitutes a parent. A parent is defined as “anyone who is the legal guardian of a learner, anyone who is legally entitled to custody of the learner, or anyone who has undertaken to fulfil the responsibility of a parent with regard to the learner’s education.” In this study the term ‘parent’ includes the biological parents, family members or legal guardians of children.

2.2.2 Parental Involvement

Researchers have different interpretations of the term ‘parental involvement’. Cotton (2001: 1) defines parental involvement as “including several different forms of participation in education and with the schools,” for example, parents support their children’s schooling by attending school functions, by responding to school obligations, they can become more involved in helping their children to improve their school work and provide encouragement, arrange appropriate study time and space, model desired behaviour, monitor homework, and actively tutor their children at home. Outside the home, parents can serve as advocates for the school. They can volunteer to help out with school activities, work in the classroom, or take an active role in the governance and decision-making necessary for planning, developing, and providing an education for the community’s children.
Edwards and Alldred (2000: 4) define parental involvement in terms of a classification of types of involvement that pay more explicit attention to home and school as sites in which parental involvement can occur. According to Ndlazi (1999: 10) parental involvement is the availability of parents to work with teacher in the governing structures of schools in the determination of school policy and vision; managing the resources and budgets and selecting staff. Squelch (1994: 52) defines parental involvement as much more than merely serving on a school committee. She states that parental involvement implies the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school- and home-based activities.

For the purpose of this study, ‘parental involvement’ in education is defined as all the actions performed by parents as explained in the definitions of various researchers above. The term ‘participation’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘involvement’ in this study.

2.2.3 Community Involvement

“Communities are the nurturing soil or substance for truly great schools. Schools cannot be vibrant unless they are firmly embedded within community structures and processes and cannot be fully effective unless they are part of community” (Eastern Cape DOE 2001: 1). In order for schools to operate effectively, they need to form connections or partnerships with community structures.

Epstein (1995: 701) defines parent and community partnerships as “the connections between schools, parents, and community individuals, organisations, and businesses that are forged to directly or indirectly promote students’ social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development.” Epstein (1995: 703) states further that a community includes “all individuals and institutions that have a stake in the success of children in school and in the well-being of families”.

Van de Venter and Kruger (2003: 260) point out that the community has a direct interest in what is taught at schools, because schools perpetuate the community’s beliefs, values and traditions. Many of the problems experienced at schools can be
minimised by the involvement of community members or organisations. For example nursing staff may address problems like HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and other health issues, while police personnel can address problems such as substance abuse and discipline problems. Swart and Phasha (2005: 230) highlight the following areas of involvement that could be targeted by communities:

- Sharing the use of school or neighbourhood facilities, equipment and other resources.
- Enhancing safety.
- Raising funds.
- Underwriting activity.
- Sharing and dissemination of information.
- Networking and providing mutual support.
- Sharing responsibility for the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes and services.
- Building and maintaining infrastructure.
- Expanding the opportunity for community service, internships, jobs, recreation and enrichment activities/facilities.
- Enhancing public relations.
- Sharing celebrations.
- Building a sense of community.
- Participating in health promotion.
- Using the school and its facilities for community functions.

It is imperative for the community to involve themselves in the local schools if they expect schools to produce disciplined and educated children who will grow up to become responsible adults in the community they reside in. Community members involved in schools motivate and show interest in children and this may help to reduce the number of learners who drop out of school. Since many school leavers will stay within the community and become active participants in its social, economic, cultural and political life, the community should be shown how to make inputs into the curriculum in such a way that learners may be prepared for adult life.
For the purposes of this study community is understood as a group of people with diverse characteristics staying in the neighbourhood in which the school is situated. Community involvement could incorporate local community members, various organisations and bodies, like non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), churches, sports clubs, businesses, clinics, police stations volunteering at school activities or members of the community residing in the neighbourhood where the school is situated.

2.2.4 School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

Van Deventer and Kruger (2003: 262) view the formation of school governing bodies in all schools in South Africa as an important milestone in the new educational reforms that took place. The South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 ensures that all stakeholders are duly represented on the governing body of a school. The SGB is represented by elected parents, learners, teachers, and the principal of the school as an ex-officio member. The number of parent members on the SGB must comprise one more than the combined total of the other members of the governing body who have voting powers.

The South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 stipulates meaningful powers and functions to School Governing Bodies (SGB) such as:

a. In terms of Section 20 of South African Schools Act (1996(c)) the governing body has to set the mission statement of a particular school.
b. The SGB is also expected to draw up a code of conduct and dealing with cases of misconduct of learners who are referred to them.
c. Promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.
d. Adopt a constitution.
e. Administer and control the school’s property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school.
f. Determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school.
g. Support the principal, teachers and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

h. Encourage parents, learners, teachers and other staff members at the school to render voluntary services to the school.

i. Recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of teachers at the school.

j. Recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of non-teacher staff at the school.

k. To determine the extramural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy.

l. To purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school.

m. To be the mouthpiece of the parents for the pupils, parents and teachers of the school and shall make decisions on the school’s mission, goals and objectives.

The above functions suggest that the SGB plays a crucial role in the governance of the school. The SGB needs the support and co-operation of all stakeholders in the education system so that they can perform their functions to their level best. Baker (1990: 19) cites that SGB members are governors and are supposed to act as a crucial link between schools, communities, and the Department of Education. Since SGB members are also part of the community, they have a closer link with the community and could encourage them to assist the school in meaningful ways. Safety of learners is important for all stakeholders so the SGB of a school has to involve the community in which the school is situated in planning for a safer school inside and outside of the school premises.

At the school involved in this study, members of the SGB are very active in the activities and practices of the school. There are eighty-eight voluntary parent and community members who are actively involved in the school’s activities on a daily basis. Their duties include being teacher assistants, medical assistants, day and night security, administration volunteers, kitchen assistants, cleaners, orphaned and vulnerable children volunteers, vegetable gardeners, plumbers and sports coaches. The chairperson of the SGB is also volunteering at the school on a daily basis.
2.3 IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents send their children to school so that they can learn the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and values needed to become active citizens later on in life that contribute meaningfully to the economy of the country. They also send their children to school so that they can become better educated than what the parents are with the hope that they will relieve the current socio-economic challenges that the parents are experiencing.

The School’s Act (SASA) as explained in Chapter 1 makes provision for parents to be involved in the schooling of their children. Often the thinking about parental involvement is limited to parents serving on school governing bodies (SGB’s) or on parent-teacher associations (PTA’s) whose functions are mainly of a fund-raising nature, or helping to organise school activities and events (Botha, Mentz, Roos, Van der Westhuizen & van Kerken, 2003: 209).

From the research undertaken it appears as if parents of today know the importance of involving themselves in their children's education but offer a lot of reasons for their non-involvement. This will be discussed in more detail during data analysis in Chapter 4 of this study. There are various ways in which parents can offer their services to schools as teaching assistants, sports coaches, administration assistants, et cetera.

Various societal and political changes in South Africa urge parents to be more involved in schools. One of the most important changes was the first democratic elections in South Africa on 27 April 1994 that brought about many new changes and restructurings. The reason for this restructuring is to introduce a system that has as its starting point a set of core values and principles which promote democracy, a people-centred and people-driven approach to development, sustainability, accountability, stakeholder participation in decision-making, nation-building, equity, efficiency and effectiveness (EPU (Natal), 1998:116). The South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 was introduced to guarantee parental participation and input;
the South African government introduced elected and representative SGBs in all public schools in South Africa (Manganyi, 2001: 25).

Schools alone cannot provide learners with the necessary resources and support; they also need parents to be involved and participate in school activities. Bojuwoye (2009: 463) cites Mwamwenda (1995) saying parents must have a say in the way their children are taught and treated. Parents have the right to know what is going on in school and should be informed about the nature of the education their children are receiving. Bojuwoye (2009: 463) cites further that the general principle is that everyone who is a parent has the right to participate in decisions that affect their children’s education (Department for Education and Skills 2005). Although some academics question whether the effects of improved parent involvement in school activities are worth the efforts (Van Wyk 1996: 36), various sources support the importance of parental involvement and see it as important to improve the culture of teaching and learning in South African schools. Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2002: 85) for instance state that parental involvement in public schools has been documented as academically beneficial by educational researchers, supported politically, and valued by many teachers and individuals in the general public.

Van Wyk (2008: 116) states that when parents are involved in the education of their child, parent-teacher co-operation holds advantages for learners, parents and teachers alike. According to Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booyens (1996: 88) an interaction of three elements is needed to achieve academic success, i.e. the learner, the parent and the teacher. Engelbrecht et al. (1996: 88) state that research has indicated that any form of education that excludes any one of the three elements, seems to be ineffective in both the disadvantaged and urban communities of the Republic of South Africa. The question arises then what benefits do parental involvement in education offer to all stakeholders. The literature review indicates that parent involvement in schools benefit all role-players, namely learners, parents, teachers and the community which it serves.
The benefits to the various role-players will be discussed in the section below.

- **Benefits to the learners**

Learners come to school with existing skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, values and beliefs they have learnt from parents at home. Parents have a great influence over their children and their involvement in the child’s school can form positive attitudes and encourage children’s achievements. According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003: 40) parental involvement, especially in the form of parental values and aspirations modelled in the home, is a major force in shaping learners’ achievement and adjustment. This is in line with what Henderson; (1987: 4) says about parents who show an interest in their children’s education and who have high expectations of their children’s performance, as this promote the attitudes forming the key to achievement (Henderson, 1987: 4). Researchers have established that parental involvement enables learners to generally perform better academically, display good behaviour and form positive attitudes about school life. In support of this Bauch (1990: 78) says that, apart from learner achievement, parent involvement also has a positive impact on regular school attendance and school success.

Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, De Jong and Jones, (2001: 2) add their voices to the above-named researches and state that parental involvement in education appears to influence learner outcomes because it offers modelling, reinforcement and instruction that supports the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours associated with successful school performance. Molepo (2000: 74) agrees and says that all children benefit from extra motivation especially if it comes from the parent showing interest in the child's education.

Gonzalez (2002: 132) also cites numerous studies that identify the existence of relationships between parental involvement and variables such as academic achievement, sense of well-being, attendance, attitude, homework readiness, grades and educational aspirations. Lemmer (2002: 197) for instance believes that parent involvement enhances learner performance at school, learners’ self-esteem, better school attendance, regular completion of homework, more positive attitudes and
behaviour, better school leaving results and higher enrolments in post-secondary education.

Mestry and Grobler (2007: 177) add to this and reason that active parental involvement improves learner performance, reduces drop-out rates, causes a decrease in delinquency and fosters a more positive attitude towards the school.

From the studies above it is clear that parental involvement is beneficial to learners relating to their academic achievement, their behaviour and their general attitude towards school.

- **Benefits to the parents**

Engelbrecht, Kriegler and Booyens (1996: 88) state that the single most important way to improve education is to strengthen parent involvement at schools. Researchers found numerous benefits to parent involvement such as a better understanding of what is happening in school (Swap, 1993: 10); increased confidence of the parents (Bastiani & Wolfendale, 1996: 74); allowing parents to develop their own skills (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 1999: 56); increased confidence and self-esteem (Molepo, 2000: 74) and the development of positive attitudes about school and school personnel (Ball, 2003: 18).

Besides the above benefits, parents who become involved in education also get to know the teachers and gain access to information and to materials giving them a better understanding of how to help their children and gain insight about the dynamics of school life in general. Being involved might also give some parents the motivation to continue with their own education and it might strengthen social networks and contact with other parents experiencing similar situations (Davies, 1988: 206).

Parent involvement may also instill loyalty, pride and a sense of belonging towards the school. Certain school projects like a garden project, a sewing project, a computer project and other skills-based projects may also benefit parents and give
them lifelong social and manual skills that they can use to get employment or to start their own businesses. Jackson and Cooper in Le Roux (1992: 36) have found that projects to improve parent involvement also help to improve communication between parent and learner and between parent, learner and school. When parents are involved in schools it thus increases their own abilities of working with learners at home and at school (Van Wyk, 1996: 37).

- Benefits to the teachers

The school and teachers benefit from active parental involvement in that they experience a higher level of support and appreciation from parents, which often leads to a rekindling of enthusiasm for problem solving and teaching (Van Wyk, 2008: 116). Swap (1993: 10) supports this and says that in programmes where parents and teachers work together, teachers are more enthusiastic and are keen to find solutions for problems. Epstein (1990: 112) reports that teachers who involve parents in the education of learners develop positive feelings about education and about the schools where they teach.

Further benefits for teachers include getting to know and understand parents, learners and the environment better (Hamby, 1992: 49). Teachers who do not live in the neighbourhoods surrounding the schools where they work get a better understanding of the community and they are able to plan activities that would be beneficial to that community. Teachers also benefit from parent involvement as parents reinforce class work at home by assisting their children with homework tasks.

According to Davies (1993: 206) the teacher’s work can be made more manageable, parents have more positive views of the teacher and the school, and the parents and others who participate are likely to be more supportive of the schools. Becker in (Henderson, 1987: 17-18) support this and says that when parents are involved in schools, teachers become more proficient in their professional activities, devote more time to teaching, and develop a more learner-orientated approach.
Swap (1992: 10) found that teachers “are impressed by the mutuality of interests and find that collaboration both broadens their perspective as well as increases their sensitivity to varied parents circumstances”.

Oosthuizen (2003: 194) explains that parents can make a meaningful contribution to school activities that fall outside of the expertise of education, but in which the parent is an expert. For example, the contribution of a parent may be of great value to the school if the parent is a doctor, lawyer, accountant, bricklayer or plumber as they can use their skills and abilities to the advantage of the school’s functioning.

- **Benefits to the community**

Van Deventer and Kruger (2003: 260) state that the community has a direct interest in what is taught at schools, because schools perpetuate the community’s beliefs, values and traditions. If learners get support from the community, they usually do well in school and will contribute positively to that community in future. Children would not want to disappoint the community which they are part of and this may reduce a number of community problems like teenage pregnancies, drop-out rate of learners, substance abuse and dependency and criminal behaviour. Children may develop into educated, employed adults who will contribute to the social and economic upliftment of that community.

According to The Public School Parents’ Network, the general contention is that when schools and homes work together to support learning, everyone benefits – the children do better in school and life; parents become empowered; teacher morale improves; schools perform better; and communities grow stronger, (Bojuwuye, 2009: 462).

Davies (1993: 206) adds that the community benefits from parent involvement by gaining access to school resources and facilities, an increased capacity to solve community problems and developing community pride. Community members may have access to the school’s library and computer facilities where they can access information which will help them solve community problems such as drug
dependency. The school’s facilities may also assist them with searching and finding employment.

According to Ball (2003: 18) and Henderson (1987: 17-18) parents that are involved in schools help gather support in the community for parent involvement programmes; they become more active in community affairs and develop increased self-confidence.

The above paragraphs explained benefits for learners, parents, teachers and community should they work together in the education of the child. Since schools and parents want children to be the best people they can be, it is worthwhile that factors and strategies be studied that can positively influence children’s development.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory describes numerous contexts of factors that influence school outcomes and this theory will be discussed next.

2.4 THEORETICAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS STUDY

2.4.1 Bronfenbrenner’s model of Ecological Systems

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory was developed in 1979 to explain how the environment affects a child’s development. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory emphasises the interdependence between different people and their physical environment in a nested system, and it is seen holistically (Donald, et al. 2010: 36).

According to this theory, children’s school outcomes are influenced by several environmental systems. The theory spells out the complexity of the interaction and interdependence of multiple systems that impact on learners, their development and learning (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 13). This theory emphasises that the environment does not merely impact on the child, but that the child is also an active participant in his/her own development. The child’s perception of his or her context influence the
way he or she responds to the human and physical milieu (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 12).

Following is a diagrammatic presentation of Bronfenbrenner’s theory which will be explained below.

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model of individual development

Source: Gray and MacBlain (2012: 100)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies five environmental nested systems that influence children's development and identify these as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem which all interact with the chronosystem. The ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner will now be discussed.
• **Microsystem**

The microsystem is the smallest environmental system in Bronfenbrenner’s theory of development (Hook 2010: 505). The microsystem is the immediate environment the child is in contact with. Children’s microsystems will include any direct interactions with their family, peers, school and neighbourhood. The learner is at the centre of the microsystem and its subsystems. These subsystems are characterised by patterns of daily activities, roles and relationships that have a direct impact on learners’ development. The experiences of learners in each subsystem will potentially impact on the success or failure of support strategies in another subsystem.

Parent involvement at school promotes interaction between the parent and the teacher in the child’s microsystem. Within this layer is a two-way process or referred to as ‘bi-directional influences’ whereby the parents’ behaviours, actions and beliefs influence the child and the child in turn also influence the parents (Gray & MacBlain 2012: 99). Therefore the parents’ positive involvement in the child’s school will influence the child positively, and vice versa. According to Hook (2010: 503), effective learning, effective parental support, supervision and motivation towards school tuition are all very important. If the communication between a school and a family are inadequate, then this will influence the child negatively at school and at home (Donald, et al. 2010: 39).

• **Mesosystem**

The mesosystem refers to the relations or interactions between the different Microsystems such as the family, school and the peer group. It describes how the different parts of a child’s microsystem work together for the sake of the child. According to Bronfenbrenner’s theory, the linkages between the family and the school constitute an important mesosystem (Santrock, 2004: 77). The linkages between the school and the home are very important in supporting the learner. Any positive experiences of the parent like acceptance from a teacher will develop into positive relations with their friends or school and any negative experiences will result in them having difficulty developing positive relations with the people in the
A learner who experiences a lack of support at home can develop behavioural and scholastic problems. If the learner however receives support from a teacher or a family member in the mesosystem, it may change interactions at home. Swart and Pettipher (2005: 11) say that a caring teacher can help with a child’s self-esteem and his sense of belonging, and the knowledge or skill in the microsystem of the school can protect the learner from the psychological effects of the lack of support at home.

- **Exosystem**

The exosystem refers to the social settings in which the developing learner is not directly involved, but they affect the learner directly (Hook, 2010: 506; and Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 11). For example, a child’s experience at home may be influenced positively or negatively by the parents’ experiences at work. If a parent had a bad day at work or is dismissed from work it might increase conflict at home and affect patterns of interaction with the child. Other examples of the exosystem may be homes of extended family members, the child’s and parent’s friends’ homes, any sports teams or other organisations the child may be involved in. The child’s school work can be affected, as well as their relationships with their parents, teachers and peers (Swart & Pettipher, 2005: 12).

- **Macrosystem**

The macrosystem is the most remote set of people and things to a child but which still have a great influence on the child. According to Bronfenbrenner’s model, these would be factors starting from the smaller microsystems outside the child, such as family and school, to the macrosystems in broader society (Bouwer, 2007: 10-15). The macrosystem includes cultural contexts such as values, beliefs, attitudes, socio-economic status and race. All of these contexts affect the way that children behave and conduct themselves. Socio-environmental factors such as unemployment or poverty may impact negatively on parents’ involvement in schools. Cultural and societal values are important factors regarding the formation of attitudes about specific behaviours. The macrosystem is seen as the master model in reference to
the patterns of the culture and society, such as the economic, social, educational, legal and political systems, of which the macro-,meso- and exosystem are definite manifestations (Hook, 2010: 506).

- **Chronosystem**

The chronosystem is Bronfenbrenner’s term for the effects that time has on all the mentioned systems (Hook, 2010: 507). The chronosystem is the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the course of life (Gray & MacBlain 2012: 99). It refers specifically to the timeframes which cross through all the other systems over time.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model has been employed in the present study because he emphasised how different contexts influence the quality of interactions of individuals directly or indirectly. Understanding the impact of the above systems on the development of the child urges us to involve parents in schools. A school going child is right at the centre of the ecological system (microsystem), all direct and indirect interactions the child has, affects the other layers influencing the child’s relationships. According to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, the involvement or non-involvement of parents in the child’s education, modify the child’s functioning in the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, and Keating (2009: 24,34) refer to Callahan, Rademacher and Hildreth (1998); Martinez-Pons (1996); Simpkins, Weiss, McCartney, Kreider, and Dearing (2006); who state that a supportive and encouraging parental involvement, such as rewarding learning-related behaviours with encouragement and praise, is typically associated with higher school achievement in learners. The positive role parents play in the child’s education would modify the child’s functioning in the mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem and may result in a child with better behaviour and higher school achievement. These authors further state that by contrast, pressure from parents through the use of commands, punishment, or coercive interactions is negatively associated with children’s school outcomes. If parents play a negative role or there is no school involvement, it would modify the child’s attitude and behaviour resulting in lower academic performance.
Another theory that supports the importance of parental involvement in schools is Joyce Epstein’s (1990) overlapping spheres of influence that will be discussed in the next section.

2.4.2 Epstein’s overlapping spheres of influence model

Schools, parents and the community have a shared interest in the development of the child and should therefore share responsibilities to educate the child. Epstein (1996: 6) states that if the school, the parents and the external community all have the same goals for children, the children will most probably succeed in achieving these goals. Epstein’s integrated theory of family-school relations is characterised by a set of overlapping spheres of influence which bring together the activities of all stakeholders.

Epstein’s model revolves around three major contexts in which learners learn and grow - the family, the school, and the community. Epstein’s theory explains that schools do not exist nor function in a vacuum and that all youth, families, communities and schools must come together as partners in the process of educating the learner. Epstein's theory of parent involvement assumes that teachers and parents direct school bureaucracies and family organisations respectively, who can best fulfil their different goals, roles and responsibilities (Epstein 1996a:121). Therefore in this model, there are some activities that schools, families, and communities conduct separately and some they conduct jointly in order to influence learners’ learning and development. Figure 2 is a diagrammatic presentation of Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence.
The child is the main stakeholder and therefore the model locates the child at the centre of the overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein (1996a: 121) provides the following three guiding perspectives for researchers and practitioners in their thinking about family and school relations.

- separate responsibilities of families and schools;
- shared responsibilities of families and school,
- sequential responsibilities of families and school.

The goal of this flexible approach to involving family and community is to make schools more effective institutions of learning (Sanders & Epstein 1998: 483). Schools, family, and community involvement cannot simply produce successful learners on its own. Parent involvement programmes and opportunities may be designed to guide and motivate learners to become successful. This shared and overlapping responsibility of the school, the family and the community creates opportunities for learners to achieve academically and be successful.
Edwards and Alldred (2000: 4) and Catsambis and Garland (1997: 1) explain Epstein’s (1990) classification of types of parental involvement as follows:

Type 1: Parenting – Schools should assist families with basic parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children’s learning at each stage and grade level.

Type 2: Communicating - Schools should communicate with families about school programmes and learner progress. Communication may take place through newsletters, memos, notices, report cards and meetings with parents.

Type 3: Volunteering – Schools should provide schedules to involve family volunteers and improve recruitment, training, participating in school activities and sport events.

Type 4: Learning at home - Schools should involve family with their children in learning activities at home and other curricular-linked activities and decisions.

Type 5: Decision making - Schools should include parents in school decisions, governance and advocacy through parent organisations.

Type 6: Collaborating with community – Schools should coordinate work and resources to include the wider community to strengthen school programmes, family practices and learner development.

According to Epstein (1996a: 215) there will be a more or less overlap and shared responsibility depending on whether many or few practices of the six types of involvement are working, and each practice implemented, opens opportunities for varied interaction of teachers, parents, and others across contexts. Each type of involvement poses specific challenges for its successful design and implementation, and each type leads to some different results or outcomes for learners, parents, and teachers (Epstein, 1996a: 216). Blackstone (1999: 81-98) states that a greater extent of overlap between teachers and parents' roles is desired for its own sake. The degree of overlapping between parent and teacher roles in education is seen as
positive for parent-teacher partnership and is being recognised on all levels of education.

2.4.3 The relation between Bronfenbrenner and Epstein's theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner and Joyce Epstein’s theories are related because both theorists focus on what is important for children to be successful. Their theories are important for this study because they both put emphasis on parents and their involvement in a child’s life. Both Bronfenbrenner and Epstein acknowledge the part played by wider influences in society.

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, the influence of a child's parents and the child's environments affect the outcome of a child’s life. Bronfenbrenner identifies five environmental systems that influence children's development as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem which all interact with the chronosystem. (Paragraph 2.4.1) Each embedded part of the model illustrates how different contexts and environments interact to promote development.

Epstein's theory is all about the life of the child outside of school and different ways how parents could be involved in a child’s life. School and home are interconnected in her theory. Epstein explores the following six types of parent involvement that have been discussed in paragraph 2.4.2: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community.

Both Bronfenbrenner and Epstein note that the developmental contexts include a child’s family, school and the community. Communication between these contexts could be beneficial for the child and may for example increase his/her academic skills, self-esteem and create a positive attitude in the child. Both theories illustrate overlapping contexts and overlapping spheres of influence in a child’s life and the more the overlapping takes place, the better results it will have for the child.

In spite of various theorists and researchers that have explored and highlighted, the benefits of parental involvement in the school that their children attend, there is still a
huge lack of parental involvement at schools. Some of the reasons why parents do not want to be involved in school activities will be discussed next.

2.5 REASONS FOR NON-INVOLEMENT OF PARENTS

In order for schools to operate more effectively and include all stakeholders, it is important for schools to know the reasons why some parents are not involved with school activities and seem to not be interested in participating in their children’s education. The following reasons for parents not being involved at schools have been identified by Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic (2000: 358):

- Lack of transport and/or childcare.
- Communication and language barriers.
- History of poor relationship with school.
- Cultural differences in seeking help.
- Beliefs about disability.
- Perception that professionals are experts whose opinions cannot be challenged.

The above reasons for non-involvement of parents will now briefly be discussed.

2.5.1 Lack of transport and childcare

Molepo (2000: 83) refers to the fact that numerous people have transport problems as a major stumbling block that hinder them from attending school functions and meetings. Most parents from poor communities do not have transport to attend school activities or meetings after school hours. The walking distance from the homes to the schools is far and unsafe especially at night. Springate and Stegelin (1999: 24) state that when teachers are implementing strategies to involve parents, the school must be sensitive to parents’ work schedules, families with single parents and families with transportation constraints.
Another reason for non-involvement in school activities is the lack of baby sitters for younger children. The smaller children especially in single-family households do not have anyone to stay with them at night. Parents also do not have money to pay someone to look after their smaller children while they attend school functions or meetings. In my experience I know that for safety reasons parents also do not want to leave their children with a neighbour, friend or in the care of older siblings.

2.5.2 Communication and language problems

Mestry and Grobler (2007: 177) found that many parents encounter obstacles to involvement in school governance due to negative or poor communication from schools. The ability to communicate effectively must therefore appear high on the priority list of schools if they want to increase parental involvement. Misunderstandings, frictions and problems arise because people do not receive communication on time, or because they interpret it incorrectly. A concerted effort must be made to formulate messages clearly, unambiguously and completely with no hidden meanings.

De Pree in Mestry and Grobler (2007: 178) states that good communication is most vital in organisations, as it creates a common bond of interdependence and mutual interest among interlocking contributors. Informing parents therefore, makes them aware of policies, procedures, aims and expectations of the school. All schools require good communication between parents and teachers to ensure good results. A lack of communication can cause a lot of problems and wrong assumptions from parents and teachers. Davies (2002: 3) explains an example of one of such an assumption that teachers have. According to this author teachers tend to think parents don’t care about their children if they are not involved in school activities. Blankstein (2004: 184) identifies one of the challenges of involving parents as teachers’ misconception that parent involvement means a one-way communication from the school to the parents. Most schools develop efficient structures for getting information out to parents and communities but they do not emphasise getting information back to schools. Effective communication however requires a two-way
flow of information as suggested in home/school communication in Joyce Epstein’s model.

According to Section 20 of the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996, SGBs are able to determine the schools admission policy as well as its curriculum and language policy. (DOE, 1997: 7) The integration of racial groups in schools allowed for inclusion of any of the 11 official languages in South Africa. The use of only the English language as a medium in verbal and written communication has a negative effect on participation of some parents, because they cannot express themselves fluently and do not understand written communication in a language other than their mother tongue. Parents become frustrated because of their inability to express themselves and therefore will not involve themselves in school activities.

- **Verbal communication**

Mabovula (2010: 1) states that through the notion of communicative action SGBs and other stakeholders will be free to exchange ideas and that they will not only voice opinions, but also listen, because through the act of engaging and listening participants can be persuaded and their thinking be transformed. Through communicating verbally all misunderstandings can be cleared. Examples of verbal communication may include face-to-face communication, telephonic communication, meetings and announcements.

- **Written communication**

Examples of written communication that can be used to inform parents of school activities are letters, newsletters, short message services, electronic mail messages. Some learners often do not give communication letters to their parents. Other parents do receive letters but because they are illiterate, they are not able to understand what is written on it. According to Molepo (2000: 76), it should be borne in mind that illiterate parents have wisdom which needs to be tapped. If the information in the letter can be explained or read to illiterate parents, they can assist and involve themselves in many ways. Although new technology communication
methods are an effective and immediate way of sending out information to parents it is also a challenge as many parents especially from poor areas cannot afford cell phones, computers and modems or do not know how to operate them.

2.5.3 History of poor relationship with school

Boaduo, Milondzo and Adjei (2008: 96) state that schools were regarded as exceptional environments for teachers, school administrators and learners. To a large extent parents and communities regarded themselves as an entity outside of the school education system. During the apartheid era parents in South African schools operated in an ethos of authoritarianism (Mureinek in Bray 1996: 35). Theron and Bothma (1988: 36) state that parents are hesitant about getting involved in school activities because of the long isolation of the schools from the community it is serving. This isolation disempowered parents and they developed a negative attitude towards schools. Where there is no history of societal expectation of parental involvement in schools, parents do not know what schools expect from them or how they can meaningfully involve themselves. The history of poor relations with schools is deeply rooted in the total control of education exercised by the previous political government.

2.5.4 Cultural differences

Konzal, cited by Bridgemohan, Van Wyk and Van Staden (2005: 8) says that more communication is needed when the child’s culture and social background differ from that of a teacher. Parents avoid going to school especially if the teacher is not familiar with their language or culture, as they fear that teachers will not understand and accept them for whom and what they are.

2.5.5 Beliefs about their own limitations

Some parents may not want to be involved due to illiteracy, disabilities such as visual or hearing impairment and may find it difficult or feel uncomfortable attending and contributing at meetings. Stern (2003: 8) explains this and says that “even though
getting involved in their children’s schooling is seen as a good thing by parents, many will feel unable to be involved or unsuited to do such work.” These parents feel that they are unable to meet the expectations of the school.

2.5.6 Perception that professionals are experts whose opinions cannot be challenged

Ebersohn (2005: 22) cites Engelbrecht, who explains the change in philosophy as follows, “… they will have to move away from an ideology based upon positivism assumptions that the professional knows best, towards an approach that values different kinds of socially constructed knowledge, combining the unique knowledge and skills of everyone.” This perception is negatively impacted by opinions like the one expressed by Borg, cited by Mills and Gale (2004: 274) who says that some parents believe that the responsibility for educating a child rests with the professionals alone.

Adding to the above barriers identified by Kalyanpur et al. (2000), the following reasons for non-involvement are also of importance.

2.5.7 Fear of victimisation

Parents are hesitant to challenge the opinions of teachers because of fear of victimisation of their children. Swap (1993: 65) supports this and says that parents of all kinds tend to treat the relationship between them and teachers, with caution, afraid to disturb or cause any problem in what is perceived as a vulnerable relationship for fear that the teacher may take it out on the child. Ramirez (2001: 117) found that many of the parents felt that if they argued with a teacher or administrator, their child might suffer repercussions by way of lowered grades, exclusion in extracurricular events, chastisement, or other negative circumstances.
2.5.8 Time constraints

Parents often do not have time and energy to involve themselves in school activities due to work obligations and/or household chores. Jesse Jackson cited by Springate and Stegelin (1999: 249) says that parents have to make time and room in their hearts, in their houses and in their daily schedule for their children. They also added that no poor parent is too poor to do that, and no middle-class parent is too busy to do that; our children must be our priority. The child must know what his/her parents expect from him/her at all times. Cotton (2001: 7) also notes that one of the reasons for non-involvement of low-income parents in school activities is because of a lack of time and energy due to long hours of heavy physical labour.

2.5.9 Socio-economic factors

McGrath and Kuriloff (1999: 604), say that the major causes of the non-involvement of parents are the socio-economic background of both the learners and the parents. Desfoges and Abouchaar (2003: 42), reiterates that a major factor mediating parental involvement is parental socio-economic status whether indexed by occupational class or parental (especially maternal) level of education. Socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and low literacy levels of parents all contribute to reasons for non-involvement of parents in school activities of their children.

- Poverty and unemployment

Cohen (1999: 47) defines poverty as the condition of having insufficient resources or income. In its most extreme form, poverty is a lack of basic human needs, such as enough nutritious food, clothing, housing, clean water and health services. Van der Linde (1993: 40) says that the rich parents can afford to support their schools financially. They can also support their children with their school work because they are literate, whereas the working class can hardly afford to feed their families and thus cannot support the schools. St. John, Griffith and Allen-Haynes(1997: 36) found that schools with middle class and rich parents support their schools, while schools
that serve low-income families have greater difficulties in getting parents involved and supporting the schools because of poverty. When people do not have work, they do not make any money, thus, high unemployment leads to high levels of poverty (Thomas, 2002: 66). In order to increase the income of the household, some children even leave school early to find employment, but eventually end up half-schooled, unskilled, unemployed and contribute further to perpetuating a cycle of poverty in the community. Desfoges and Bouchaar (2003: 42) summarised three possible mechanisms through which social class might operate. One of the mechanisms mentioned is “A culture of poverty”, in which working class families place less value on education than middle class parents and hence are less disposed to participate. Parents feel embarrassed because they are poor and do not have the capital resources to contribute to the school. Some poor parents are not keen to be involved in school activities because they are afraid that this would place an extra financial burden on them.

- **Low level of literacy**

Cooter (2006: 698) differentiates between functional illiteracy and intergenerational illiteracy. She defines a functionally illiterate parent as an adult who does not have adequate reading skills to fill out a job application, read a food label, or read a story to a child. Intergenerational illiteracy is explained as often finding that three or four generations of a family have low literacy skills. They may also hold culturally supported beliefs about leaving school to support their families.

According to Strauss and Burger (2000: 41), parents in previously disadvantaged communities are illiterate and poor; they cannot assist their children with school work and support the schools financially. Cotton (2001: 7) notes that low-income parents are often underrepresented among the ranks of parents who are involved in schools. They cite embarrassment or shyness about their own educational levels or linguistic abilities as reasons for non-involvement in schools. Stern (2003: 11) defines schools as complex, professional and accountable institutions with legal structures, policies and other formal rules that may scare parents away. Ntshingila (2006: 5) reported in the Sunday times that one in three South Africans over the age of 20 has no
schooling at all or has not completed primary school. This alarming figure represents a very high percentage of illiterate parents who lack the required literacy levels to participate freely in educational matters and to assist children in South Africa with schoolwork.

2.6 SCHOOL CLIMATE

Since parental involvement benefits the child, parents, teachers, school and community (paragraph 2.4), schools should make a concerted effort to create a more inviting school climate for all stakeholders, particularly since South African schools is characterised by diverse cultures and languages. Lezotte and Jacoby (1990: 147) emphasise the importance of the school climate and the environment of the school for parental involvement.

Freiberg and Stein (1999: 11) refer to school climate as the core of the school; the value of a school that brings about a wholesome learning place, where pupils' and parents' dreams and ambitions are tended, and teachers motivated to function at their best, where everybody is respected and feel attached to the school.

School climate is defined by Hoy and Miskel (2001: 189-190) as "a blend of beliefs, values and attitudes of pupils and staff members, headteachers and parents, level of independence, styles of leadership and job satisfaction."

School climate can be described as all elements seen and unseen in the school environment. Some of the elements that can be seen or are visible include communication, relationships and school policy. Elements that cannot be seen or that are hidden include feelings, ethos and atmosphere of the school. The following elements have an important effect on the school climate and will be discussed in the next few paragraphs: relationships, communication and opportunities for involvement, healthy and safe environment, school policy and atmosphere of the school.
2.6.1 Communication

Communication is defined as the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium (www.oxforddictionaries.com). Building consensus and understanding difference through dialogue is at the heart of nurturing a culture of communication and participation among all school governance stakeholders (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2001). One of the challenges according to Blankstein (2004) (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.5.2) is teachers’ misconception that parent involvement means a one-way communication. Clear communication between schools and parents is important and must be two-way so that there could be mutual understanding of key issues of the school. If parents listen to teachers and teachers listen to parents, then meaningful communication and a healthy atmosphere for working together is built. Teachers will understand the cultural values of parents and parents will know what the expectations of teachers are. This kind of open communication would create an environment that is conducive for working together. Swart and Pettipher (as cited in Engelbrecht & Green, 2007: 107) highlight the fact that in order to become an inclusive, caring community that celebrates and accommodate diversity, an all-embracing school culture that communicates and lives a philosophy based on the principles and values of equity, social justice, respect, acceptance, belonging and dignity is required. The personality, attitude and communication style of teachers could encourage an atmosphere of open communication and create a feeling of respect, acceptance, belonging, and dignity to parents. An open line of communication will encourage parents to speak out and share issues that they find distressing or challenging.

2.6.2 Relationship

The South African Council of Teachers (SACE, 2002: 2) suggests that the teachers of the 21st century have to recognise the parents as partners in education, and promote a harmonious relationship with them. Blankstein (2004: 168) observes that relations between school, family and community can often be minimal or even rocky - rife with misunderstandings, misinterpretations and disagreements. This relationship is further strained with teachers that only call parents in to discuss
negative behaviour or unsatisfactory academic performance at school. Teachers on the other hand may believe that although they try hard to build relations with the parents, their efforts go unnoticed.

Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum, Staude, Amos and Klopper (2004: 338) describe feelings as a reflection of the emotional climate. According to Perkins-Gough (2008: 89) parents' feelings about their child's school, whether positive or negative, influence how deeply they get involved in school activities. To enhance the relationship teachers must be sensitive about what they say and how they say it. Parents' feelings can also be influenced by the manner in which information is obtained from the school. In her report about school climate, Perkins-Gough (2008) found that parents that got information about their child’s school primarily from newspapers and television, had much more negative views of the school's safety, respect and expectations. The relationship between parents and teachers can improve if there is mutual trust, respect, and a feeling of ‘ubuntu’ (human dignity) between them. A sound relationship between teachers and parents is much needed in all schools and will positively affect the school climate.

2.6.3 Opportunities for involvement

Schools need to create an environment that values and encourages interactions between teachers, parents and learners in order to create a climate conducive to working together. Heystek (1998: 18) indicates that a majority of schools do not provide enough opportunities for the parents to participate in the school activities. Heystek (in Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillijord, 2002:122-124) says that schools must create opportunities and reasons for the parents to come to the school. Social activities may include sport and other extra-curricular activities. Academic meetings may include parent evenings or subject-related meetings. Schools must initiate the process by identifying their needs, and then provide the opportunities and the structures for the parents to be involved. According to Lewis (1999: 48), knowledge and competencies of the parents are of utmost importance to enable them to be effectively involved.
2.6.4 Creating a healthy and safe environment

Each and every South African school is required to have a Health and Safety policy. This policy should make provision for creating a safe environment for all stakeholders as well as ensure the safety of the school’s property, buildings and grounds. A safe environment contributes towards the physical and mental safety of all stakeholders in the school. This policy will also have guidelines on how to reduce violence, vandalism, substance abuse, injuries and other transgressions. A teacher has a legal and moral obligation to protect learners against dangers, to which learners maybe exposed, arise in a multitude of forms in and around a school or during school activities and the legal implications arising from them differ from case to case (Oosthuizen, 1995: 48). An effective school is identified by researchers like Lezotte and Jacoby (1990: 84) as a safe and orderly environment. Lezotte and Jacoby (1990: 147) say that in “an orderly, purposeful business-like atmosphere which is free from threat of physical harm, the school climate is not oppressive, and is conducive to teaching and learning”. According to them an orderly, purposeful atmosphere is important for parental involvement as well as for children’s learning. Parents should feel a sense of safety and security in the school buildings and surroundings.

2.6.5 School Policy

Bridgemohan, et al. (2005: 10) say that schools and the education departments are faced with a huge task of involving parents in the education of their children and there are no clear policies to guide them. Epstein and Dauber (1993: 61) suggest that schools should have a policy for involving parents in schools and at homes to work with their children on school work. According to Boyer (1991: 33) the policies must be well structured; they must “build bridges between home and school”. A policy involving parents in school activities will have a positive effect on the school environment and make parents realise that their assistance and involvement is needed at school (Perkins-Gough 2008: 89).
2.6.6 School atmosphere

The school atmosphere includes elements that are mostly unseen and hidden but observed and strongly felt by visitors entering the school. The school atmosphere may include observations, perceptions or vibes you experience from the moment you enter through the school gates until you leave the school premises. An outsider may observe whether the gate is open or closed and draw his/her own conclusion about the discipline or security of that specific school. An outsider may also observe the condition of the reception area, the walls depicting a silent history of the school, behaviours, attitudes and the way in which you are welcomed and addressed by the school secretary and rest of the staff. All of these elements can make you feel welcome or make you never want to return to that school. The ethos of the school must reflect the value systems and cultural beliefs of the learners and the community which it serves.

2.6.7 Welcome

Eason-Watkin (in Blankstein, 2004: 172) states that in many conversations she had with parents and members of the community, the parents felt that most schools did not want them to participate, nor to be part of the school. The feeling of being unwanted and shut out sometimes stems from parents’ own experiences in the school. Those parents who struggled in their own academic careers may feel resentment, distaste, or even anxiety about interacting with school officials. Cotton (2001: 7) states that there is a perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators. Blankstein (2004: 169-174) identifies the following principles towards building relationships with families and communities: mutual understanding and empathy, make parents feel welcome, involve parents in the curriculum, involve parents as support system for the school and do community outreach.

2.6.8 Invitations for participation

Due to the past history parents have with schools, they do not want to interfere and want to be asked to get involved or invited to get involved in school activities. School
staff members must initiate the participation of parents and manage their involvement effectively. Schools cannot go with the presumption that parents want to be involved and know how to involve themselves in school activities. According to Heystek and Louw (1999: 22) the motivation of the parents to participate at schools depends on the teachers and the principals. Researchers say that parents must be invited to the school. Mills and Gale (2004: 274) state that parents, like anybody else, expect to be invited to come to school. Even after the initial invitation in the form of a letter for example, schools cannot just leave it at that, they have to follow up the invitation with a reply slip filled in by the parent. Inviting parents demand initiative, strategic planning, and good leadership skills from the school management team to increase and maintain parental involvement in schools. The request on the invitation letter must also be distinct and say exactly what the school’s expectation is. It may include things such as a child’s request for help with homework or a teacher’s request for an assistant in the classroom. Teachers may believe that they have invited parents because they sent home an invitation; however, parents may not have received and read the invitation. Teachers’ perceptions of an invitation, even when received and read by parents may not be interpreted as an actual invitation. Gonzalez-DeHass and Willem (2002: 90) state that even if teachers thought that it made practical sense to invite parents’ input, they fear that doing so will take away their authority as teachers and will bring parental criticism of their instructional methods, curriculum decisions, and classroom management techniques.

2.6.9 Ethos of the school

Ethos is defined as the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations (Oxforddictionaries.com). A positive school’s overall ethos provides all stakeholders with a safe and respected environment. A positive ethos and climate of respect, tolerance and trust based upon shared values across the school community must be strived for by the school. Parents need to feel safe, secure and valued. The school must encourage parents to express their views without prejudice and offer support to parents. The teachers must be caring and promote positive relations and effective communication with the parents.
2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined how different authors define parental and community involvement. The functions of the SGB, the importance of parental involvement, benefits of parent involvement, reasons for non-involvement of parents and the effect of the school climate on parent and community involvement were discussed in this chapter.

One of the functions of the SGB is to encourage learners, teachers and parents to render voluntary services to the school. In order to perform this function to their best, the SGB needs the support of the whole school community. The School’s Act as explained in Chapter 1 makes provision for parents to be involved in the education of their children, but there are still many parents and schools that do not regard parental involvement as a priority.

In this chapter the literature emphasised the positive effects on learners, parents, teachers and the community when parents and community members are involved in the school’s activities. Parental involvement enables learners to perform better academically, display good behaviour and form positive attitudes about school life. Parents benefit because they have a better understanding of what is happening in school, their confidence and self-esteem increase and they develop communication, administration and/or physical skills. Teachers receive support, appreciation and assistance from parents. The community benefits from parent involvement by gaining access to school resources and facilities, having an increased capacity to solve community problems and by developing community pride.

Despite all the above positive effects parent involvement may have on the child’s success and on school effectiveness, parents offer various reasons for their non-involvement. The following reasons have been identified and discussed in this chapter: Lack of transport and/or childcare, communication and language barriers, history of poor relationship with school, cultural differences in seeking help, beliefs about disability, perception that professionals are experts whose opinions cannot be challenged, fear of victimisation, time constraints and socio-economic factors.
This chapter highlighted the value of a positive school climate. School management teams have to devise special strategies to create a positive school climate and boost meaningful parent involvement. Some of the strategies schools could apply to increase parent involvement, is to improve the school atmosphere and make it more inviting and welcoming to parents. Schools must also ensure that effective communication takes place which will result in a harmonious relationship between parent and teacher.

This chapter also discussed the theoretical framework of the study based on the model of ecological systems of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Joyce Epstein's (1990) theory of overlapping spheres of influence.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory identifies five environmental nested systems that influence children's development as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem which all interact with the chronosystem. This ecological theory emphasises the interdependence between different people and their physical environment on the development and school outcomes of the learner.

Joyce Epstein's model revolves around three major contexts in which learners learn and grow - the family, the school, and the community. The model locates the learner at the centre of the overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein (1990) explores six major types of home-school-community involvement: parenting; communication; volunteering; learning at home; decision making and community collaboration. Each type of involvement poses specific challenges for its successful design and implementation, and each leads to different outcomes for learners, parents, teachers and the community.

The next chapter will discuss the research design and methods that were used to collect data.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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3.11.1 Letters of permission

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3.11.3 Confidentiality and anonymity
3.2 INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

The empirical part of this study is discussed in this chapter and the following aspects of the research methodology will be explained: the research design, the research paradigm, the research methodology, sampling, the data gathering instruments, data analysis, trustworthiness and reliability, as well as ethical measures.

The literature study in Chapter 2 indicates that if parents are involved in schools, it is beneficial to all stakeholders. Parent involvement gives parents confidence, it improves their self-esteem and it makes them feel worthwhile. It enhances learner performance at school, learners’ self-esteem, better school attendance and regular completion of homework. For example research conducted by Swap (1987: 23) indicate that parents who are actively involved at school also feel positive about their own abilities to care for learners and they feel more empowered and confident because they understand more of the dynamics of school life. Bauch (1990: 78) says that parent involvement leads to better learner achievement, improves attendance and school success. Mestry and Grobler (2007: 177) also mentions improvement of learner performance, reducing drop-out rates, decreasing delinquency and fostering a more positive attitude towards the school.

Since school is about producing successful learners, it stands to reason that parent involvement should be one of the crucial issues in schools. However, despite all the benefits parental involvement offers and regardless of the efforts by government to involve parents like the introduction of the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996, schools still experience various difficulties in involving parents and community members in school activities.

The research problem of this study thus is the reluctance of parents to become involved in schools despite various attempts from government and the schools themselves.
3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question that focuses my research is:

3.3.1 Main research question

How can a positive school climate be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school?

3.3.2 Secondary research questions

The secondary research questions are:

- Which strategies could be applied to increase parent and community involvement at schools?
- What are the benefits of family and community involvement in schools?
- What are the reasons for non-involvement of parent and community members in schools?

3.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of this study based on the research question and sub-questions are as follows:

3.4.1 The Aim

The main aim of this research study is to investigate how a positive school climate can be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school.

3.4.2 The objectives of the study are to identify:

- The strategies that can be applied to increase parent and community involvement at schools.
• The benefits of parent and community involvement in schools.
• The reasons for non-involvement of parent and community members in schools.

3.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Creswell (2005: 9) states that the reason for conducting any research project involves recognising and identifying the key aim for a study and narrowing it down to a specific research problem.

The purpose of this research study has been developed from the research problem and it aims to:
• investigate how a positive school climate can be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school.
• identify which strategies can be applied to increase parent and community involvement at schools
• establish the benefits of family and community involvement in schools
• identify the reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in schools

3.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The findings of the study will be significant in the following ways:

• It will help schools who have not been successful in increasing parent involvement, with more appropriate strategies to attract parent and community members to their schools.
• It will provide possible solutions to conquer reasons offered by parents for their non-involvement in schools.
• The recommendations and conclusions drawn from the study could be useful for the school in the study, or even for other schools faced with a similar problem.
• It may assist tertiary institutions to include modules on parental involvement in school to the curriculum of students studying to become teachers.
• The Department of Education could use the findings and recommendations to develop training material and provide support to school management teams and school governing bodies.

3.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study design was used to gather relevant and appropriate information about the teachers, family and community members. A case study, according to Mouton (2001: 149), “is qualitative in nature, exploratory, descriptive and aims to provide an in-depth description of a number of small cases.”

Brown and Dowling in Mouton (2001: 149) view a case study as “an endeavour that focuses on a single actor, a single institution, a single enterprise usually under natural conditions, in order to understand it.”

Flick (2006: 141) states that the goal of a case study is “the exact description of a case, identifying the subjects of a case analysis and then identifying or selecting a case that would be suitable for answering your research questions. Answers to the research questions are therefore case-specific, and in most cases cannot be generalised.”

Punch (2009: 119) states that “a case study aims to understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context. It also has a holistic focus, aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case.”

Bassey in Briggs and Coleman (2007: 143) states that an educational case study is an empirical enquiry which is: “Conducted within a localised boundary of space and time, which is mainly in a natural context and within an ethnic of respect for persons and which is such that sufficient data are collected for the research to be able to explore significant features of the case, to create plausible interpretations of what is
found, to test for the trustworthiness of these interpretations and to construct a worthwhile argument or story.”

Thomas (2009: 115) states that “a case study involves in-depth research into one case or a small set of cases. The case may be a child, a teacher, a class, a school, a social services department. The aim is to gain a rich, detailed understanding of the case by examining aspects of it in detail.” He states further that we study a case when it in itself is of very special interest and we look for the detail of the interaction in its contexts.

Pring (2004: 41) suggests that a case study is the ideal research design to use when one wants to emphasise the uniqueness of actions or events because every case is being shaped by the meanings of the research respondents. Thomas (2003: 35) shares this view that a case study becomes a suitable tool for “depicting uniqueness”. The main reason for choosing this specific school to conduct my research at is because the school is unique in the sense that it is locally well-known and recognised as a leading school in the successful implementation and involvement of parents and the community to improve the general functioning of the school.

Gillham (2000: 102) mentions that “case study research is important to provide insight and better understanding about the life of a specific entity or case.” Other individuals or organisations in similar situations could therefore benefit from the research findings and recommendations pertaining to this case. A case study approach is most effective when a researcher strives towards a comprehensive understanding of how respondents relate and interact with each other in a specific situation.

The research design which was used for this research study was a case study to investigate the involvement of parents and community members at a specific school in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. I chose the case study as my research design because even though the research findings cannot be generalised, the recommendations and conclusions drawn from the study could be useful within this
specific context, or even at other schools faced with a similar problem. The intention of the study is not to generalise the findings of the research but rather to understand this specific school (case) in its context and to use recommendations and conclusions drawn from this specific context to apply to other schools in similar situations.

3.7.1 Research Paradigm

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 31) define the research design as a plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. Erwee (1994: 20) adds to this and claims that “the research design is a basic plan, which guides the collection of data and analysis phases of the research project” and that the design “provides the researcher with the guidelines for addressing research topics, and also enables the investigator to anticipate potential problems in the implementation of the study.”

The research conducted for this study is based on the interpretive paradigm. According to McFarlane (2000: 27) the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand and interpret social situations by the researcher becoming part of the situation or close to the people involved with them, to listen to them and share their experiences. As a researcher, it was through conducting interviews that I was able to listen to the experiences of teachers, parents and community members, and in doing so I attempted to interpret how the respondents give meaning to their experiences.

McFarlane (2000: 27) further says that “interpretivists cannot accept the existence of objective knowledge in the form of general laws applicable to social affairs and people’s behaviour. They see knowledge as understandable only through the participant’s frame of reference”. This means that the researcher must be actively involved with the people who are the subjects like in the case of this research study. The research paradigm, on which this study is based, can also be referred to as the naturalistic paradigm which is similar to an interpretive paradigm. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 27) the naturalistic paradigm is concerned with what happens in natural settings. By being in the situation that is being researched,
researchers gain a better understanding of the data and the phenomenon being investigated. The main reason for the researcher to be in the situation is concern for the context. The setting has to be understood in the context of the history of the institutions in which they are respondents. The role that all stakeholders play in parent and community involvement can only unfold itself in their natural setting, which is the school. For this reason I conducted research in the school setting to gain a better understanding of the culture and context of the school as well as to understand information received from respondents.

3.7.2 Research Methodology

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 20) define methodology as “a theory or an analysis of how research should operate”. It also refers to the way in which general scientific statements or procedures of disciplines are acted out in research situations. In qualitative inquiry the intent is not to generalise the findings to a population, but to develop an in-depth investigation of a central phenomenon. In this study the central phenomenon was the role of school climate to enhance the involvement of parents and community members in the activities of a school.

3.7.2.1 Qualitative Research

The research method used in this study is qualitative research. The qualitative researcher collects data by interacting with selected persons in their settings (field research) and by obtaining relevant documents.

Davies (2007: 10) cites Denzin and Lincoln (2003) in defining qualitative research. He says that qualitative research locates the observer in the world of the research participant and “consists of a set of interpretive practices that makes the world visible” to others. Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach, which entails studying things in their natural surroundings in an attempt to understand and make meaning of their situations.
According to Ary, et al. (2006: 449) qualitative researchers aim at obtaining an “insider’s perspective”, in other words, they try to comprehend events in the way in which they are experienced by the respondents.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 133) highlight that qualitative approaches have two things in common. First, they focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings - that is, in the “real world”. Secondly, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity. In this study I analysed teachers, parents and community members’ own spoken words which was collected during an interview to get views on parent and community involvement in the school. The qualitative approach was used in the study so that the researcher would be able to attain rich, real, deep and valid data.

Cresswell (2003: 181) lists the main characteristics of qualitative research by building on the thoughts of Rossman and Rallis (1998). According to this researcher qualitative research takes place in the natural setting of the research participant which is often the home or office of the research participant. Qualitative research uses multiple methods of data collection, which involve the active participation of the researcher, as well as the research respondent.

Merriam (2002: 21), on the other hand refers to the qualitative research as a mix of rich, thick description and interpretation.

According to Creswell (2003: 181), McMillan and Schumacher (1993:15) and Huysamen (1994: 166) qualitative research has an “emergent” design. This means that researchers may adapt their data collection procedures during the study to benefit from data which they have only become aware of during the research process itself. Gillham (2000: 6) describes the emergent design as “making sense of what you find after you’ve found it”.

The aim of the research is to get the teachers, parents and community members’ perceptions and views on parental and community involvement at the school. The research took place at the respondents’ natural setting (the school) as described by Cresswell (2003). After the interview sessions, when the data was analysed, I
became aware of new information that surfaced or emerged and had to adapt the research question and included a questionnaire in the data collection procedure.

3.7.3. Sampling

Sampling is the process that the researcher used to select the respondents in the study. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004: 197) sampling is the process of drawing a sample (subset) from a population (larger group). Brink (2001: 133) states that “a sample is a fraction of a whole selected by the researcher to participate in the research project.” In this study the sample is a fraction (subset) of the school population (large group) the researcher selected to participate in the research project.

Purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling, was used in the study. The choice of respondents for the study was purposive which “… involves … hand-picking respondents for a study … for the specific qualities to the study” (Lankshear & Knobel 2004: 148). According to Huysamen (1994:44), purposive sampling is the most important type of non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling gives a researcher a chance of selecting cases with a specific purpose. The benefits of using purposeful samplings according to Neuman (2000: 198) are that:

- The researcher uses it to select cases that are especially informative.
- A researcher can use it to select members who are difficult to reach, i.e. a specialised population.
- A researcher can identify certain types of cases for in-depth investigation.

Purposive sampling implies that particular criteria are used in the choice of respondents who would be able to provide the data required for the investigation (Maree, 2007: 79). I purposefully selected the respondents and the setting in this study. The sampling method was purposeful, based on aspects of convenience and availability. The sample for this research consists of five SMT members, five post level one teachers, five parents and five community members at a primary school in Port Elizabeth. One of the SMT members is the Principal of the School and one of
the parents is the Chairperson of the SGB. The purpose of using these respondents in this study is because they are information-rich by being most knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena under investigation. The study was limited to one school in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth. Due to the small sample from the school in this study cannot be considered to be a true reflection of all the schools in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth and therefore cannot be generalised to all the schools in South Africa. The information from this study could however be used to improve school climate and increase family and parental involvement in schools with similar conditions.

Creswell (2000: 192) claims that for qualitative research, permission is needed at many levels to access a site. According to Hammersley and Atkins cited by Creswell (2000: 192) a gatekeeper is an individual who has an official or unofficial role, provides entrance to a site and helps the researcher locate people. In this research, during interview sessions, the deputy-principal of the school was taken as gatekeeper as she knows the teachers, parents and community members involved in the school and could also grant me permission to access the school. During the session that questionnaires were distributed and completed by respondents, the project manager of the volunteer committee was used as gatekeeper because she has been a volunteer at the school since the year 2002 and knows all the teachers, parents and community members volunteering at the school.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

As a researcher I have collected data by audio taping the interviews conducted and by distributing to and collecting questionnaires from the respondents. The exploration and description of this case study takes place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving sources of information that are rich in context.

3.8.1 Data Collection Instruments

In an attempt to address the objectives of this research, two data gathering strategies were used for the collection of data. Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 143) state
that qualitative researchers often use multiple forms of data in any single study. For the purposes of this study interviews were used because the researcher wanted to gain insight in the thinking, beliefs and perspectives of the respondents on parental and community involvement at the school. The researcher also used questionnaires to establish elements of the school climate that encouraged parents and community members to get involved in school matters. Each of these two strategies will be briefly explained below.

3.8.1.1 Interview

Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 198) define an interview as a “pre-arranged interaction between two or more people where one person is responsible for asking questions pertaining to a particular theme or topic for formal interest and the other(s) is/are responsible for responding to the questions”. There are different types of interviews that could be employed namely structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. I used semi-structured interviews which will be discussed below.

- **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews have pre-prepared questions which are used as a guide during the interview, while still allowing for the respondents’ own views to be expressed. They also allow the researcher to probe for additional responses from the interviewees. Henn, Weinstein and Foard (2006: 162) state that the use of probes, prompts and a questioning style which is flexible enables the researcher and the respondent to engage in dialogue about the research topic. McEvoy, (2001: 49-59) points out that in qualitative research, the interviewer is not after factual information but interviews generate socially constructed knowledge.

In this study two different interview schedules were developed with open and closed questions in order to get rich detail from the respondents. One interview schedule was drawn up for the teachers at the school and another one for the parents and community members involved in the school activities. Examples of the interview
schedules to teachers are attached as Addendum A and interview schedules to parents/community members as Addendum B. The first sections on both interview schedules were closed questions related to the biographical details of the respondents. The second parts of the interviews were open-ended questions prompting the respondents to relate their experiences as involved teachers, parents or community members at the school. The interviews focused on the advantages of involvement and reasons for non-involvement of parent and community members at the school. The researcher followed the naturalistic interviewing strategies by keeping the respondents talking and to express the researcher’s interest in what they have to say. With open-ended questions respondents are free to answer in their own words and to express their own opinions and ideas, and to offer further suggestions.

Initially, I decided to use only interviews to cover the data collection part of the research, because I was of the opinion that the study would only cover the strategies used at the school to increase parent and community involvement, benefits of and the reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in schools. However, after the data was analysed, the researcher was taken into a different direction of the study. The response to the interview questions revealed that quite a huge number of the respondents mentioned how they were treated and what they felt initially when they got involved in the school. This discovery prompted me to investigate how a positive school climate can be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school. I designed a questionnaire to gather data from the respondents.

### 3.8.1.2 Questionnaires

Thomas (2003: 66) defines a questionnaire as “a printed set of questions used to gather facts and respondents’ opinions.” Burns and Grove (2005: 311) explain that “a questionnaire is a printed self-report form designed to elicit information that can be obtained through written responses of the subjects.” Babbie (1999: 39) defines a questionnaire as “a set of questions on a form, which is completed by the respondent in respect of a research project.” Davies (2007: 82) states that “questionnaires are
aimed at facilitating communication either in writing, in the form of a conversation, or electronically."

Questionnaires have been designed “to determine facts about events or situations known by subjects, or beliefs, attitudes, opinions, levels of knowledge, or intentions of the subjects” (Burns & Grove, 2005: 311). A questionnaire (see Addendum C) was designed to obtain the facts and opinions needed to answer the research questions.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A of the questionnaire elicited responses on the importance of parental/community involvement to all stakeholders in schools. Section B was divided into clear sections which were identified as themes during the analysis of the interviews. This section extracted reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in the activities of schools. Elements of school climate were identified during literature readings and were used in Section C to elicit data. The types of questions used in the questionnaire were multiple-choice questions. Multiple-choice questions offer specific alternatives from which respondents have to choose (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 92). The aim of the questionnaire was to determine the benefits of parent and community involvement, the reasons for non-involvement and the importance of certain elements in establishing a positive school climate. The questionnaires were completed anonymously to ensure that no respondent could be identified. No codes were used on the questionnaires in an effort to ensure absolute anonymity and in order to obtain truthful answers. Questionnaires from parent and community member respondents were collected immediately after they had completed them. Questionnaires from teacher respondents were collected a few days after it was issued to them.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The related literature readings revealed many references to the meaning of data analysis. For example, Mouton (2005: 108) states that data analysis involves the “breaking up of data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships.”
Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 137) define the data analysis process as “allowing the researcher to generalise the findings from the sample used in the research to the larger population in which the research is interested.” Bogdan and Biklen (2003: 147) state that “data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interviews, transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with findings.” Patton (2002: 432,453) states that qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. The challenge to me was to convert all the raw data collected, to find significant patterns and to translate it into findings.

3.9.1 Inductive Analysis

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 296) and McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 479) qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of “organizing the data during data gathering, rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection.” This means that categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed on data prior to data collection. The data collected from the interviews were analysed inductively and this consisted of the discovering of themes, coding and organisation of the ideas emerging from the data. The aim of identifying themes and patterns is to reduce the amount of data and to facilitate the analysis of the data. The interviews were conducted mainly in English although a few of the respondents replied in Afrikaans. It was translated by the researcher. The data analysing process is explained below.

The data were analysed qualitatively by using Tesch’s (1990) descriptive open coding method as described in De Vos (2002: 341) to identify emerging themes. Also see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.10.

The process I used to analyse the data is explained below:

- I listened to the voice recordings and then transcribed the data by writing the interviews down word by word to get a sense of the meaning of each response;
- I then worked through the transcripts and categorised the responses according to the richest response;

- After repeating this process with all the transcripts, I made a list of all the categories and grouped them together and identified major themes.

- I then labelled the themes that were identified through thematic analysis.

- I then made a final decision about themes, sub-themes and categories and assigned codes to these in order to facilitate coding of data.

- By the end of the analysis phase I revisited the findings and linked them with related literature to substantiate and prove the research findings.

3.10 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

3.10.1 Reliability

Best and Kahn (2003: 285) state that a test is reliable to the extent that it measures whatever it is measuring consistently. Reliability, according to De Vos (2002: 168), “refers in general to the extent to which independent administration of the same instrument consistently yields the same (or similar) results under comparable conditions.”

In this study careful consideration was given to each aspect of the data collection, data interpretation and data analysis process in order to ensure reliability. Reliability of data was established by capturing all the interviews on a tape recorder and transcribing it in writing. Attempts were made to reproduce the interview scripts as accurately as possible. Data occurring frequently have been identified as themes and sub-themes in this study and are proof of reliability. During my visits to the school, the respondents were also invited to examine if the data collected, had been correctly captured.
3.10.2 Validity

De Vos (2002: 166) states that “validity refers broadly to the degree to which an instrument is doing what it is intended to do – and an instrument may have several purposes that vary in number, kind and scope”. The validity of the researcher's findings was checked throughout the process of analysis and interpretation of data. Validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking (Creswell, 2002: 280). Throughout the research process the researcher involved the supervisor in discussing and validating of the findings.

3.10.3 Trustworthiness

Lankshear and Knobel (2004: 366) state that showing the trustworthiness or “believability” of a research study, illustrates the researchers’ ability to persuade the reader that the research findings are reliable, important and worth considering. The researcher must clearly demonstrate that sufficient data has been collected for the needs of the study, which are largely determined by the research questions. The concept ‘sufficiency’ refers to the amount of data collected for a study and the quality of evidence provided to support the researcher’s interpretations (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004: 366). Any claims and interpretations made by the researcher in relation to the data and research questions must be substantiated with enough appropriate evidence.

In this study, the researcher has made every effort to remain neutral and objective throughout the study by revisiting the collected data and reflecting on interpretations comparing and affirming it by means of triangulation. According to Denzin, cited by Maxwell (1996: 75), triangulation means “the collection of information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods.” De Vos (2002: 352) points out that the collected data should substantiate the general findings that guide the researcher to the interpretations. This implies that research findings must be free from bias and that the research data must support the research findings, recommendations and interpretations. I made every effort to always remain objective
and base my findings on existing data only. In support of the interpretation of findings, the literature study was used as part of a triangulation process.

### 3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sikes (2004: 25) states that research is an activity that affects people’s lives, therefore research should be ethical. Mouton (2001: 238) says that the researcher should have knowledge of the ethics of research which concerns what is wrong and what is right in the conduct of research, because scientific research is a form of human conduct, and it follows that such conduct has to conform to accepted norms and values. Flew in May (1997: 54) defines the concept ‘ethics’ as “a set of standards by which a particular group or community decides to regulate its behaviour and to distinguish what is legitimate or acceptable in pursuit of its aims.” According to Babbie (2001: 470), anyone who is involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreement about what is proper and improper in scientific research. Ethical principles are thus based on what is right, proper and acceptable according to the norms and values of a particular group or community. In order to uphold the ethical code, the researcher followed the following ethical procedures:

#### 3.11.1 Letters of permission

To manage the data, the researcher had to take into consideration certain ethical considerations and procedures that needed to be applied when conducting research as required by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the NMMU Research Ethics Committee (Education), with reference number H11-EDU-ITE-025 (Addendum D).

Wiersma (2000: 418) emphasises the need to obtain permission from the approving body if the research is conducted in an educational setting such as a school district. Before embarking on this study, the researcher first obtained permission from the Education Department (Addendum E). Before the collection of data started, I obtained written consent from the Principal to conduct research at the school (Addendum F).
3.11.2 Informed consent

According to Neuman (2000: 124) no one should be forced to participate in a research project, people must take part voluntarily. Babbie (2001: 470) also labels informed consent as “voluntary participation”. Leary (2001: 335) argues that obtaining informed consent indicates that the researcher respects respondents’ privacy and provides them with required information, which could help them decide whether to agree or decline to participate in the study. According to Strydom (2005: 59) informed consent implies that any information on the goal of the study, then procedures used throughout the study, any foreseeable advantages or disadvantages as well as dangers to which the respondents may be exposed and the credibility of the researcher have to be made apparent to the respondents prior to the commencement of the study.

I first made an appointment with the principal to request permission and to explain the purpose of the research. On my first day doing research at the school and prior to the commencement of the interview sessions, I informed each participant what the purpose of the research was. The researcher explained that participation is voluntary and respondents could withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalisation. In addition to that, each participant signed a consent form that detailed the purpose of the study, indicated the respondents’ involvement, as well as included the contact details of the researcher, in case of any questions or uncertainties (Addendum G).

3.11.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

The right to privacy refers to an individual's right to decide when, where, to whom and to what extent his/her attitudes, beliefs and behaviour may be documented (Strydom, 2005: 61). Research respondents were briefed about their right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality as prescribed by Mouton (2001: 243) and Gregory (2003: 49). Respondents were assured that all collected data was for research purposes only and that all information would be handled confidentially. The questionnaires were completed anonymously.
3.12 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I explained the research paradigm, methodology and sampling. An interpretivistic paradigm was used and a qualitative methodology implemented. Purposive sampling was chosen for this study. The data collection and data analysis methods employed in this research investigation were also outlined. Reliability, validity and trustworthiness of data collection were discussed. The chapter concluded with ethical considerations and trustworthiness in the context of this study.

Chapter Four will present a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data collected through interviews and questionnaires.
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4.2 INTRODUCTION

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

4.3.1 GENERAL BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF TEACHERS

4.3.2 GENERAL BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

4.3.3 DATA ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

4.4 CONCLUSION
4.2 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 the research design, research methodology, data collection instruments, data analysis, reliability, validity, trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed.

This chapter presents a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data collected through interviews and questionnaires. The data collected from the interviews were analysed inductively and this consisted of the identification of themes that emerged from the data.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of data collected from teachers, and parents and community members follow next as well as the researcher’s interpretations of the data:

4.3.1 GENERAL BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF TEACHERS

This section deals with biographic details such as gender, age, qualification and years of teaching experience of teachers from the primary school investigated in the study. This information would enable the researcher to have a better understanding of the background of the respondents.

4.3.1.1 Gender of teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Gender of teachers
Table 4.1 shows that 70% of the respondents are females and 30% are males. The reason for the low rate of participation among male teachers could be that generally more females than males are employed at primary schools.

### 4.3.1.2 Age of teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36 - 40 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 45 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 - 50 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 55 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 - 60 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Age of teachers

Table 4.2 indicates that 30% of the respondents are between 36 to 40 years, 20% between the ages of 41-45, 46-50, and 56-60. Only 10% is between 51-55 years of age.

A deduction can be made that none of the respondents is younger than 35 years of age, which means all the respondents are mature. The implication of their maturity is that they may have more experience of parental and community involvement. It also implies that mature staff members value parental and community involvement more because of the emphasis placed on it by the current curriculum.
4.3.1.3 Highest qualification of teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDE (Higher Diploma in Education)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters degree in Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Highest qualification of teachers

From Table 4.3 it is noted that half of the respondents (teachers) have qualifications of a teaching diploma 40%, while 20% possess a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and a further 20% have a Higher Diploma in Education. 10% have a Post-Graduate diploma and 10% a Masters degree in Education. This points out that all the teachers have the qualifications and the knowledge necessary to teach children and would therefore be able to transfer their knowledge to the parents so that they can be able to assist their children with schoolwork at home. A further deduction that can be made is that because they are qualified teachers, they may understand the value of parent and community involvement better and thus will probably promote this at the school.
4.3.1.4 Years of teaching experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Years of teaching experience

Table 4.4 above indicates that 30% of the respondents have been teachers for 21 – 25 years while 20% have 26-30 years teaching experience. 10% of respondents have teaching experience in the groups 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 31-35 years and 36-40 years.

The table shows that the majority of teachers (70%) interviewed in this study falls between 21-40 years of teaching experience. This is an indication that they were already teaching before 1994 when South Africa became a democratic government. These teachers have both the experience of teaching under the previous Apartheid government as well as under the new democratic government, meaning that they can give a good response in comparing parental and community involvement under both governments.

A further deduction can be made that most of the teacher respondents have over two decades of teaching experience and can thus provide reliable and trustworthy responses.
4.3.1.5 Years of teaching at the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Years of teaching at school

This table reflects that 30% of teachers have been teaching at the school between one and five years and 70% of teachers have been teaching between six and twenty five years. These percentages indicate that the majority of teachers have been teaching at this school for many years and can thus express reliable and trustworthy opinions about what is happening at the school.

4.3.1.6 Training in working with parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (SMT) School Management Team</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (SMT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (SMT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (SMT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (SMT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (PL1T) Post level 1 teacher</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (PL1T)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (PL1T)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (PL1T)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (PL1T)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Training in working with parents
The analysis of this question revealed that 70% of respondents have not received official training in working with parents and 30% have received training. This is an indication that teachers did not receive training on parental/community involvement at the institutions where they have studied for their initial qualification. It also indicates that their employer, the Department of Education did not offer in-service training on parental and community involvement to teachers at the school in this study. The 30% of teachers, who were trained, received training from the union sites, non-governmental organisations and tertiary institutions, during further teaching and training programmes.

4.3.2 GENERAL BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

This section deals with biographical details such as gender, age, years of involvement, as well as what roles parent/community members occupy at the primary school that was involved in this study. Each item of the biographical details is discussed separately. This information would enable the researcher to have a better understanding of the background of the respondents.

4.3.2.1 Gender of parents/community members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Gender of parents/community members

Table 4.7 explains the situation regarding the gender of parents and community members involved at the school. The table shows that 100% of the respondents are females and 0% is males. The reason for this is that male respondents were not available on the day the interviews were held. Another reason may be that some fathers are working or trying to find formal work. It is also a natural phenomenon that
mothers are more caring in terms of child care. This finding is in line with an observation by Mestry and Grobler (2007: 180) that almost in every culture, females play a bigger supportive role in a family.

### 4.3.2.2 Ages of parents/community members

Data relating to the ages of parents/community members are detailed in table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 - 30 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 40 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 45 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 - 50 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – 55 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Ages of parents/community members

Table 4.8 indicates that 90% of the respondents are over the age of 36. A deduction that can be made is that the majority of the respondents in the study are more mature and might thus have more experience of parental involvement in the school.

### 4.3.2.3 Roles in the school

Data relating to the roles of parents/community members are detailed in table 4.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer (Community member)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Roles of parents/community members

In table 4.9 a total of ten respondents were interviewed of which five were parents of learners at the school and the other five were community members involved in the school’s activities. It appears that parents are involved because they want to learn
how to assist their child/ren in their education. It can be deduced that community members want to make use of the opportunity to empower themselves and they are involved in an attempt to improve the community around the school.

4.3.2.4 Years of involvement

Data relating to the years of involvement of parents/community members are detailed in table 4.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 5 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10: Years of involvement of parents/community members

This table reflects that 60% of parent and community volunteers have been involved at the school for five years and less and another 40% have been involved for 6-10 years. This means that more than half of the parents and community respondents have experience of being actively involved at the school and they can thus supply reliable and trustworthy information of their experience regarding parental and community involvement at the school. It also shows that these respondents are very serious about their role at the school and the value of their involvement.

4.3.2.5 How parents/community members became involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How parents/community members became involved</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request by teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own initiative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need at school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request by SGB</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited by other parent/s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11: How parents/community members became involved
Table 4.11 indicates that 50% of parent/community members were invited or requested by teachers, SGB or other parents to get involved in the school. This is in line with Mills and Gale (2004: 274) who state that parents, like anybody else, expect to be invited to come to school.

20% of respondents got involved in the school’s activities because of their own initiative and a further 20% because they saw a need at the school. A deduction can be made that these respondents could only identify the need and see the reason to get involved because of the opportunities and the programmes the school offers. This is confirmed by the finding of Heystek (in Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillijord, 2002: 122-124) who says that schools must create opportunities and reasons for the parents to come to the school.

10% of the respondents became involved because this community member is employed by the Department of Education and receives a stipend from the department to assist the school with the orphaned and vulnerable children.

4.3.3 DATA ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

The data obtained has been grouped into themes and sub-themes derived from multiple readings of the raw data, and from words and phrases used by the respondents. From the data the following themes and subthemes were identified:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>SUB-THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3.1 The establishment of a positive school climate to improve parental and community involvement</td>
<td>4.3.3.1.1 Communication between teachers and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.1.2 Positive working relationships between teachers and parents/community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.1.3 Opportunities for involvement in school activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.1.4 Providing of a healthy and safe environment for learners, parents and community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.1.5 A school policy regarding parent and community involvement at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.1.6 A friendly and welcoming school atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.1.7 Ethos of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3.2 Strategies that could increase parent and community involvement at schools</td>
<td>4.3.3.2.1 Regular and effective communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.2.2 Creating opportunities and inviting parents to be involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.2.3 Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.2.4 Leadership and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3.3 Effects of family and community involvement in schools</td>
<td>4.3.3.3.1 Benefits to the learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.3.2 Benefits to the parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.3.3 Benefits to the teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.3.4 Benefits to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3.4 Reasons for non-involvement to parental and community involvement</td>
<td>4.3.3.4.1 Transport/childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.4.2 Time constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3.4.3 Socio-economic factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the data analysis are discussed according to the main theme and sub-themes that emerged from the data. Appropriate, direct verbatim quotes are used to interpret the results. Literature readings are provided to validate or nullify the findings.

These themes and sub-themes will now be discussed below.

4.3.3.1.1 Communication between teachers and parents
4.3.3.1.2 Positive working relationships between teachers and parents/community members
4.3.3.1.3 Opportunities for involvement in school activities
4.3.3.1.4 Providing of a healthy and safe environment for learners, parents and community members
4.3.3.1.5 A school policy regarding parent and community involvement at the school
4.3.3.1.6 A friendly and welcoming school atmosphere
4.3.3.1.7 Ethos of the school

4.3.3.1 Theme 1: The establishment of a positive school climate to improve parental and community involvement

The interviews and questionnaires revealed that a positive school climate is needed to improve parental and community involvement.

4.3.3.1.1 Communication between teachers and parents

Respondents indicated that it is important to communicate verbally with parents. The analyses of the questionnaires reveal that all the respondents agree that the school communicates effectively with parents about their child/children’s academic progress and behaviour. All the respondents agreed that the opinions of parents/community members are valued and respected when communicating with teachers at the school. Respondents expressed that it is also important not to ignore parents who
visit the school, but to show interest by communicating cordially with them. This data is supported by the following verbatim response expressed by a teacher:

“The way we communicate with them when they are sitting there at the desk, on the bench, ‘Are you helped, good morning, how are you?’ and that makes them feel that they are part of the school.”

The study revealed that the school uses a number of communication methods such as letters, newsletters, parent meetings, open days, policy conferences, word of mouth, crisis focal points, phone calls, SMS (short message services) and home visits. In Epstein’s (1990,1996) typology of parent involvement, she describes communication as a type of parental involvement that may take place through newsletters, memos, notices, report cards and meetings with parents (Edwards & Alldred (2000), (Chapter 2, Paragraph 2.4.2).

The analysis shows that all the respondents are in agreement that the school does not give short notice but that the school provides adequate notification about school events and activities, as revealed by the following verbatim responses by some of the teachers:

“Well we do have letters, we send out newsletters on a regular basis. For emergencies we do have phone numbers.”

“We have parent meetings, policy conferences, newsletters that we send out when the need arises, crisis focal points, we also do home visits once a quarter or twice a quarter.”

“There was an open day; the letters went out a month before.”

4.3.3.1.2 Positive working relationships between teachers and parents/ community members

The analysis of the data displays that all the respondents agree that the school has a
good relationship with parents and community members. Respondents indicated that they are not afraid to disagree with teachers and do not have concerns that their disagreements may disadvantage their child/ren. From this data it appears as if there is a good working relationship between the teachers and parents. In the interviews most of the respondents indicated that the relationship is good most of the time, although they do experience problems sometimes. This is supported by the following verbatim responses expressed by some of the respondents:

“I have a very good relationship on both sides. I don’t have any problems.”

“We’re talking to each other as family, we all have good relationships. Yes, I’m not saying there’s no problem, some days most of the times we are having a good relationship because we talk when something is wrong.”

4.3.3.1.3 Opportunities for involvement in school activities

The analysis of the questionnaire reflects that all of the respondents agree that the school provides enough opportunities for parents/community members to be involved in various school activities. It emerged from the data that the majority of parent/community respondents got involved at the school because they were invited to the school and they wanted to be involved in the activities available at the school. The finding shows that the school makes a variety of programmes available and provides many opportunities for parents and community members to be involved in. The finding is also in line with Calitz et al. (2002) who state that schools must create opportunities and reasons for parents to come to school. Examples of projects that have been very successful according to the respondents were the following: skills development programme, the clinic, the ‘House of Hope’ giving refuge and counselling to abused kids, the vegetable garden, the volunteers project, and also when the school arranged for services from the Department of Home affairs that the wider community needed. The following verbatim responses support these findings:

“There are eighty-eight volunteers on the school that include security, teacher volunteers, admin staff, helping the secretary in the office, volunteers in the clinic.
People helping the OVC (Orphaned and vulnerable children) they go out into community when we have problems with the learners in our classrooms, we report to ..., she does house visits. She is paid through the education department."

“We get in social development. We get in the Police, the department where they can apply for social grant, identity documents. That is what the school gives to the community and they always very glad for the services the school can provide. At the school we are here to educate, but we go beyond that just to get the community involved.”

(Training in) “Home-based care, HIV and Aids, TB (tuberculosis), first aid, bereavement and pre-counseling. There were Holland people from overseas that they gave us that training home-based care, how to talk with elderly people.”

The analysis shows that it is important to encourage and invite parents and members from the community to be involved in the school and the education of the child. The finding at the school in the study is that staff members do encourage and invite parents as is evident in the following verbatim response:

“We’ve got open days nowadays whereby all parents are invited to school and they have an opportunity to come and speak to teachers and also have an opportunity to look what their children’s work looks like, their work progress. We ask them to assist us in what problems we have.”

A respondent said in the interview, “The principal is making sure he’s getting people from outside to train us.” It appears that volunteers are not just recruited, but are also empowered with skills. In the study it was found that volunteers have received different types of training such as computer literacy, first aid, HIV/AIDS, bereavement, pre-counselling, home-based care as well as ABET (Adult Basic Education and training). It was revealed that the school makes these opportunities available not only for parents with children at the school, but also to the broader community. It appears that the school makes use of parent/community members
extensively because apart from all the programmes mentioned above, they are also involved in governance (SGB) and assist with coaching of sport as well.

4.3.3.1.4 Healthy and safe environment for learners, parents and community members

The finding revealed that providing a safe and healthy environment for parents/community members is important. It appears from the interviews and the researcher's observation that the school is attempting to safeguard the school community. The school is surrounded by a fence. The inhabitants of the two security houses on the school premises look after the day- and night time security of the school. During break times, there are teachers as well as parent/community members supervising the learners and ensuring that there is no bullying or any other deviant behaviour taking place. The school is secured by burglar bars made and fitted by parent/community members. The researcher has observed that the main school gate is always open. An explanation for that could be that there are always people and vehicles moving in and out of the school premises, but not locking the gates makes it is easy for unauthorised entry into the school premises. This data is supported by the following verbatim responses expressed by teacher respondents:

(There are) “Two security houses on the premises.”

“We had a lot of burglaries but that stopped when they put the burglar bars on. We had the welding people; they did this.”

The analysis of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of respondents agree that the school grounds and buildings are in a good condition.

All the respondents agree that the school promotes healthy practices e.g. no-smoking. The school claims to be a health-promoting school and it appears that everyone is upholding those values. It appears as if everyone is abiding by the ‘no-smoking’ policy at the school. There is a clinic on the premises and parent/community volunteers attend to sick children and do referrals of serious cases
to the local clinic in the area. The OVC assistant divulged in the interview that she
does home visits to the children who have HIV/AIDS and checks if they take their
medication regularly. It was disclosed that the school organises awareness
campaigns to warn the community about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse.
This data is supported by the following verbatim responses expressed by a
community member and a teacher respectively:

“The clinic, we also do class talks about health, drug awareness. Every quarter we
are supposed to give a lecture on a topic. Last quarter we had a talk about hygiene,
this quarter we are supposed to do drug awareness.”

“Our school is a health promoting school. I remember one day there was a white lady
at the school. I saw her smoking, so I sent one of the children to her and told her that
the school is a smoke-free zone. She was so very surprised.”

4.3.3.1.5 A school policy regarding parent and community involvement at the
school

The analysis of the questionnaire reveals that half of the respondents agree that
there is a policy regarding parent/community involvement at the school. The other
half either disagrees or do not know whether there is a policy regarding
parent/community involvement at the school. The numbers of volunteers fluctuate
every year, volunteers come and go and therefore may not know whether there is a
school policy on parent/community involvement. The research study revealed that
once every five years, the teachers and parents have a policy meeting where old
policies are revised and/or amended and new policies formulated. During these
policy meetings the long-term vision and goals of the school are also established.
This is in line with Perkins-Gough (2008) (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.5) who reveals
that a policy involving parents in school activities will have a positive effect on the
school environment and make parents realise that their assistance and involvement
is needed at school. Following is the verbatim response articulated by a teacher
respondent.
"A policy conference, a ‘bosberaad’ in (the year) 2000 and we’ve been having one every five years and next year we are going to our third year, our third conference. That’s where parents tell us what they’d like to see happening at the school."

An overwhelming number of respondents indicated that there is a health and safety policy at the school, thus it can be safely deduced that the school does have a health and safety policy in place.

From the data received it appears that the school governing body has an influence on school policy. The written response of a member of the SGB on the questionnaire indicated that the SGB played a significant role in the introduction of a third language (isiXhosa) to Grade one learners at the school. Verbatim evidence follows:

“We make sure that all the policies are happening. They are not just in black in white in the books. All of them are there. Yes we do sometimes (make changes to school policy) if we see that it’s not helping, it’s not doing nothing.”

4.3.3.1.6 A friendly and welcoming school atmosphere

The atmosphere at a school can make visitors feel welcome or unwelcome which may affect the involvement or non-involvement of parents and community members in the school. It appears from the data analysis that the school attempts to create a positive school atmosphere by setting a high standard in the administration block which then has a ripple effect to the rest of the school. The analysis of the data validates that parents and community members feel comfortable visiting the school at any time with or without making an appointment. The analysis also confirms that the school has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and that everyone is treated with respect and dignity at the school. The vast majority of respondents agree that there are courteous, friendly and helpful people specifically assigned to welcoming visitors at the school. These findings are evident in the following verbatim responses:

“We have an open-door policy. They are welcome any time.”
“We don’t ask parents to make an appointment to come to school. If they feel they want to come to school, they are welcome and we will slot in time to speak with them.”

“She (the secretary) knows what to tell the parents and sometimes the parents are rude then she got a very calm way, stern but friendly way.”

It appears that the school is following Blankstein’s (2004) (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.7) principles of making parents feel welcome in order to build relationships with families and communities as discussed in Chapter 2.

4.3.3.1.7 Ethos of the school

All the respondents agree that the school respects the culture, language and race of all parents/community members. From all the data gathered, there was never any indication that the cultures, languages or races of parents or community members were disrespected. It can be deduced that the school portrays human values of respect and dignity. This finding is confirmed in the following verbatim responses:

“Treat them (parents) as they are, even if they are half under the influence. Treat them well. Let them feel they are welcome. It should never be I am here and they are down there. Treat them as equal as you can.”

“We love each other and when we talk to each other, it is with respect.”

“What I think is that anybody that walks in at the door, at the school’s door; need to be treated as the most important person.”

“I got a philosophy. I treat everyone as if they Jesus Christ and that help building self-esteem.”
4.3.3.2 Theme 2: Strategies to increase parent and community involvement at schools

The interviews and questionnaires revealed that the school in study uses the following strategies for increasing parental and community involvement in school activities.

4.3.3.2.1 Regular and effective communication
4.3.3.2.2 Creating opportunities and inviting parents to be involved
4.3.3.2.3 Motivation
4.3.3.2.4 Leadership and planning

4.3.3.2.1 Regular and effective communication

The analysis of the data reveals that parents communicating on a regular basis with teachers are more eager to give assistance at school. Respondents disclosed that a strategy the school applies is to arrange parent meetings at locations in the community. In this instance the school applies the strategy that Blankstein (2004: 177) describes as “bringing the mountain to Mohammed”. This means that information about school activities and events are provided to the community and meetings are kept in places where the parents are.

Respondents also indicated that the home visit is a very good strategy in enhancing parental involvement. The study revealed that another strategy the school applies is to advertise school functions in the local newspaper and spread pamphlets informing parents and the community about upcoming events. The following verbatim responses support the finding about home visits and advertising.

“Each quarter doing home visits, informing parents of the progress of the children not just for children who’s performing poor or got discipline problems but for those children doing well to encourage them to do better.”
“It’s the advertising that we do. For all the projects the newspaper comes, the local newspapers.”

“The pamphlets work well.”

It appears that when teachers listen actively to input from parents, it also encourages effective communication and increased parental involvement at the school. This correlates with what Konzal cited by Bridgemohan, Van Wyk and Van Staden (2005: 9) says, namely: “When teachers really listen to parents they can learn much to help shape what goes on in their schools in ways that meet the needs of parents and children.” The following verbatim response supports the finding about applying active listening skills in order to improve communication.

“The Policy conference of 2000 was excellent. That made us shift about how we listen to parents. I think those kind of conferences were very powerful for our school.”

A further strategy the school applies to effect better communication is to allow parents to speak in the language of their choice and the school ensures that there is a translator present in all the meetings. Respondents also mentioned that correspondences in the form of letters from the school to the parents are written in at least two languages.

It appears that the school applies a couple of strategies for better communication and therefore a deduction can be made that effective communication takes place between the school and the parents/community members.

4.3.3.2.2 Creating opportunities and inviting parents to be involved

The analysis reveals that the school has created many opportunities for parents and members of the community to be involved in the school’s activities. Respondents mentioned events where especially learners are involved in, such as dances, bingo’s, cultural evenings, family days and award functions as effective strategies to increase parent involvement. Other strategies mentioned by respondents that are
very successful at the school, are the skills training programmes and the volunteering programme. The following verbatim responses confirm the above analysis.

“Activities where parents are involved where you can actually see they come up is when you have a dance, bingo, cultural evening, especially when children are there. There’s poverty, so if there is a dance, it’s uplifting their spirits.”

“Family days, then long before the time, parents come to school to help the children with sport events and so on and then on a specific day you get the whole family.”

“When they have the ‘end of year awards’, they also do get a great deal of parents here. Annual sport award days.”

“Community training like welding, plumbing, carpentry ....They get a certificate.”

It appears from the data analysis that a lot of parents will not get involved if a request is not made or if they are not invited to do so. All the respondents agree that parents and community members are regularly invited to attend meetings and to get involved in the school’s activities. If we refer to Table 4.11 it indicates that 50% of parent/community members were invited or requested by teachers, SGB members or parents to get involved in the school. The deduction that can be made is that half of the parent/community member respondents would not have been involved in the school’s activities if they were not invited by someone to do so. This finding is in line with Mills and Gale (2004: 274) who state that parents, like anybody else, expect to be invited to come to school. The following verbatim responses confirm the analysis made.

“I talk to the community and tell them they must come; you gain a lot of things here, instead of sitting around the house, visiting their family.”

“We send out letters to invite them (parents) to the school.”
“For open days we invite the parents to come to the teachers about their learners academic, they get chance to discuss the work with the teachers.”

“They can invite them to take part and volunteer here because you can’t stay at home the whole day doing nothing.”

The study reveals that schools must not take for granted that parents/community members will involve themselves in the school programme. An oral or a written invitation must be extended to them requesting their involvement in the school.

4.3.3.2.3 Motivation

The data analysis confirms that the school principal and school management team are aware of the importance of motivation. It appears that although extrinsic forms of motivation (stipend, no school fees) have an important place in the motivational process in a school, the value of intrinsic motivation should not be underestimated. It seems that the efforts of staff, parents and learners are recognised and acknowledged contributing greatly to the cooperation of staff and ultimately to the effectiveness of the school. The importance of motivation is evident in the following verbatim responses:

“It’s good that he (the principal) encourages the staff. It helps to build us …It’s good that you have someone to encourage you.”

“It’s good to know that your leader actually appreciates what you are doing and he thanks his staff for doing work for the last few weeks whoever that did whatever and he gives recognition and acknowledgment for that.”

“It was when we had a stipend for everybody. So everybody knows that if you coming here you will get something.”
4.3.3.2.4 Leadership and planning

The analysis of the data reflects that the planning of all these programmes and activities is vital, otherwise teachers and parents would not be willing to give cooperation and the programmes would not be sustainable. It seems as if the school is operating proactively by having policy conferences every five years where long term vision is discussed. In order to realise the vision of the school, strategic planning is very important. The principal is fortunate because as one of the respondents put it, he has a ‘willing staff’.

In the verbatim responses below it appears that the principal actively listens and guides and motivates staff as well as parent/community members. One of the respondents referred to the principal as a ‘true leader’ and another respondent as an ‘open leader’. It appears that the principal is sensitive towards the needs of the whole school community and his authority is derived from his eagerness to improve the school for the general good of the learners, the staff, the parents and the community members.

“Hy’s nie ‘n hoof nie, hy’s ‘n ware leier.” (Translation: He’s not a principal, he’s a true leader).

“The principal is a good person for us and we take the principal like a father.”

“I would say the fact that our principal, he’s a very open leader and because he’s eager to want to improve constantly.”

“Basically you have to put a plan in action. We have got our year planner so that teachers cannot come back and say it is short notice.”

“We have policy conferences where we try to establish long term vision with the parents and teachers.”
4.3.3.3 Theme 3: Benefits of parent and community involvement in schools

The data was analysed and it was found that when parents are involved in schools, it has benefits for all stakeholders.

4.3.3.3.1 Benefits to the learners
4.3.3.3.2 Benefits to the parents
4.3.3.3.3 Benefits to the teachers
4.3.3.3.4 Benefits to the community

4.3.3.3.1 Benefits to the learners

The benefits of parent involvement to teachers will now be analysed and interpreted. Researchers have found that parental involvement has multiple benefits to the learner. One of the respondents said: “Children do well with support from parents.” This statement corroborates findings from Mestry and Grobler (2007) that active parental involvement improves learner performance, as also explained in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.

Respondents also mentioned that the relationship improves between parent and child. Further benefits that the respondents mentioned were the emotional state of learners where they experience feelings of pride, importance, safety and it boosts their self-esteem when their parents are involved in the school. This is in line with Lemmer (2002) (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.3) who mentions that parent involvement enhances the self-esteem of learners. This data is reflected in the verbatim responses that follow:

“You and your children got a relationship.”

“The child feels proud of his/her parents.”

“It boosts the child’s self esteem too because ‘my mother is here at school.’”
It was also mentioned that the meal cooked by parents/community members is a benefit to children who come to school hungry. “Some children come to school hungry so they can eat the food that parents and community members prepare.” Mosokwane (2001: 61) states that ‘there is increasing evidence that good nutrition enhances pupils' academic performance.’ If good nutrition enhances the academic performance of learners, then by implication, being hungry at school would result in poor concentration and poor performance of learners.

4.3.3.3.2 Benefits to the parents

The benefits of parent/community involvement to parents will now be analysed and interpreted. The following are verbatim responses from respondents:

“Parents get insight on how the school operates.”

“They know what is expected of them in learning and upbringing of the child.”

“There is a better relationship between the parent and the teacher.”

From these verbatim responses it can be deduced that parents benefit by gaining more knowledge about the operations of a school and about the school’s expectations from the learner. It appears that parents develop better working relationships with teachers and can help their children with schoolwork when they are involved in school matters.

Other benefits mentioned by respondents are that parents get skills, knowledge and training in different areas and learn more about computers, gardening, sewing, brick-making, welding, beadwork and health issues. Adult basic education classes allow parents and members of the community the opportunity to learn and improve in basic numeracy and literacy. The training they received has also enabled other volunteers to find jobs and upgrade their resumes. One of the teacher respondents disclosed that her husband, who was unemployed, also did the welding skills training. He discovered that he has a talent for welding and was employed at a tertiary institution
after that. In the interview it was discovered that a lot of the parent and community member volunteers also play a leadership role in the community. It is evident in the fact that they are very active members in political organisations, street committees and have leadership roles in church. It appears that the training and workshops parents receive, improves their confidence and boost their self-esteem. The above analysis is supported by findings of Ball, (2003: 18) that parents actively involved in their children's education, develop more positive attitudes about school and school personnel; help gather support in the community for parent involvement programmes; become more active in community affairs and develop increased self-confidence. The following are verbatim responses to support these findings.

“They get skills, education; learn more about health, hygiene.”

“Parents get knowledge, training.”

“Parents get opportunities to learn”.

“A lot of them got jobs, internships and stuff like that”

4.3.3.3.3 Benefits to the teachers

The benefits of parent/community involvement to teachers will now be analysed and interpreted. The following are verbatim responses from respondents:

“Teachers can focus more on the child if there is an assistant in the class.”

“If there’s a language problem, the assistant can translate to the teacher or the learner.”

“It makes the workload of teachers easier.”

“The teacher can concentrate on school work because the teacher assistant can take the sick child to clinic and the clinic assistants do referrals to the local clinic.”
It appears from the findings that with teacher assistants in the class, teachers can give more individual attention to learners. The teacher’s workload is less because the teacher assistants help with administrative work. Davies (1993) (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3) confirms this finding that the teacher’s work can be made more manageable.

Oosthuizen’s (2003) (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3) explanation that parents can make a meaningful contribution to school activities in which the parent is an expert also seems to be true. This is reflected in the following verbatim responses:

“The school gets help (from volunteers) with cleaning and maintenance of the school premises and securing the school buildings.”

“The school doesn’t have extra expenses because the volunteers fix broken items.”

“We don’t hire somebody to cut the grass. The toilets are cleaned, the corridors are cleaned. I think this community involvement is the most successful at the school. From the school side there’s no expenses.”

The deduction that can be made is that there are a lot of advantages for teachers when parents and community members assist the school.

4.3.3.3.4 Benefits to the community

The benefits of parent/community involvement to the broader community will now be analysed and interpreted. One of the parent respondents said in the interview:

“This problem with the drugs. The community people living here they came to the school and talked to the principal what can we do as the school to help with this problem we have in the area.”
The school then organised a drug awareness campaign whereby residents were educated about the dangers of drugs. “The school educates the community.” “They are taught about drugs.”

Some of the volunteers are community leaders. In the community meetings residents are informed about what the school does for the community, for example:

“In community meetings they report everything, for example the support that the school gives to grade 12 learners.”

“The school offers two or three classrooms that they have available over weekends for the purposes of church.”

The ‘house of hope’ provides refuge for vulnerable children and women from the community. It was also mentioned that the people of the community come to the school so that the secretary can phone the police or ambulance when they experience problems. It can be deduced that the community supports the school in all its projects and looks after the school because the school is uplifting and helping the children as well as the adults from the community. This analysis correlates with Davies (1993) (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3) who states that the community benefits from parent involvement by gaining access to school resources and facilities, an increased capacity to solve community problems and developing community pride.

4.3.3.4 Theme 4: Reasons for non-involvement of parents/community members

The analysis of the data revealed the following reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in schools.

4.3.3.4.1 Transport/childcare
4.3.3.4.2 Time constraints
4.3.3.4.3 Socio-economic factors
4.3.3.4.1 Transport/childcare

The analysis of the questionnaire discloses that the majority of respondents agree that parents cannot attend school functions because they do not have transport. According to one of the parent respondents transport is the main reason why parents cannot get involved in the school. This is reflected in the verbatim response below:

“Transport is actually the main problem.”

This finding has reference to the finding of Molepo (2000) (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.5.1) who stated the fact that numerous people have transport problems as a major stumbling block that inhibited them from attending school functions and meetings.

Regarding childcare the finding reflects that the majority of respondents agree that parents cannot come to school meetings because there is no-one to look after younger children at home. This finding is evident in the following verbatim response:

“I think the situation at home, a lot of them are looking after three or four children, sick people, old people, distance from the school, transport and some of the parents are working.”

4.3.3.4.2 Time constraints

In the interviews respondents indicated that meetings and open days occur during school hours. It was found in the data analysis that parents who are employed do experience problems in attending school meetings or open days during school hours. This is evident in the following verbatim response of a teacher.

“When parents are working class they generally don’t have time to invest in their children, the extramural activities, Saturdays or even helping their children with homework because a lot of them are working shifts; they are working long hours. They are quite tired when they get home and they have the household
responsibilities taking over the academic responsibilities of the child. You have to cook, do the washing and clean the house because there’s no maid.”

In the case above, Cotton’s (2007) finding that one of the reasons for non-involvement of low-income parents in school activities is because of a lack of time and energy due to long hours of heavy physical labour, appears to be correct.

4.3.3.4.3 Socio-economic factors

Data extracted from the interviews reveal that another barrier to parent and community involvement is alcohol abuse. In an investigation to the issue of adult alcohol abuse, the GMSA (2007) report states that “Alcohol abuse is a major problem. On doing home visits parents are often under the influence”. It was found that even at school, some parents are poor role models. They visit the school when they are under the influence of liquor. This is confirmed by a verbatim response of one of the teacher respondents:

“What we also do is when a parent comes and she is maybe under the influence, we’ll talk about the matter and we will also speak to her about the example that she sets when she comes to school. If you were the child and your mother came in such a state, how would you feel?”

The data analysis also revealed that alcohol abuse make some parents feel ashamed and self-conscious and they would therefore not get involved in school matters. This finding is confirmed by the following verbatim response of a parent:

“Alcohol abuse, alcohol play a very big role because some feel too ashamed and also because they are poor. There’s some of us that live in the worst conditions you won’t think that people can live like that. They are self-conscious and going to school every day and not be drunk ...... so those are the things that keep people away.”
4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the views and experiences of teachers, parents as well as members of the community involved in the school’s daily activities were presented. The analysis of the following themes was the focus of this chapter: establishment of a positive school climate, benefits of parent/community involvement, strategies to enhance parent/community involvement and the reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in schools. A detailed analysis and interpretation of the data collected through interviews and questionnaires from respondents were analysed and interpreted in this chapter.

Chapter five will draw conclusions based on the research findings and provide recommendations on improving levels of parental/community involvement by enhancing the school climate.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The final chapter commences with a general overview of the research study in order to demonstrate that the aims originally expressed in Chapter one, have been addressed and achieved. I will then present conclusions based on the findings, in answer to the research questions. Lastly, some recommendations will be made for further research and for future practice around the role that school climate plays in improving parental and community involvement.

5.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY

A brief outline of the purpose of this study will now be provided.

5.2.1 Problem statement

School management teams experience many challenges in their efforts to improve the effectiveness of their schools. According to Section 20(1)(b)(c) of the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996, some of the functions of SGBs include the creation of an environment conducive to teaching and learning, promoting the best interests of the school, ensuring quality education for learners, ensuring safety and security of learners, taking disciplinary action and encouraging stakeholders of the school to render voluntary services to the school. In order for the SGB to perform its functions optimally, it is critical that all stakeholders are involved in school matters. The dilemma is however that most school leaders and SGB members have not received any training in how to involve parents and the broader community in school issues. In the light of this study, schools cannot simply hope and leave it to chance that parents will involve themselves in school matters. School leaders should intentionally apply strategies recommended by this study to create a positive school climate to enhance parental and community involvement. There is therefore a need
to explore strategies in which schools can be helped to improve the involvement of parents and members of the broader community in schools.

5.2.2 Main aim of research

Based on the above problem statement, the main aim of this research study is to investigate how a positive school climate can be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school.

5.2.3 Objectives of research

Derived from the main aim, the objectives of the research were to identify:

- The strategies which can be applied to increase parent and community involvement at schools.
- What the benefits of parent and community involvement in schools are.
- The reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in school activities.

Based on the findings of the qualitative investigation, the purpose of the study is to make recommendations as to how best the findings in this case study can be used to implement the successes of the case study school in other schools.

5.2.4 Main research question

How can a positive school climate be established to improve parental and community involvement in a school?

5.2.5 Sub-questions

- Which strategies could be applied to increase parent and community involvement at schools?
- What are the benefits of family and community involvement in schools?
• What are the reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in school activities?

5.3 CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of the study are based on the case study research conducted at the participating school. During my visits to the school, interviews were conducted and questionnaires distributed and collected.

5.3.1 Conclusions in support of main aim and objectives of the study

The focus of the research study was the experiences of teachers, parents and community members regarding school climate to improve parent/community involvement.

From the data analysis, it is concluded that a positive school climate to improve parental and community involvement can be established by applying the strategies of effective communication, good working relationships, creating opportunities for involvement, ensuring a healthy and safe environment, formulating a school policy for parent/community involvement, inviting and making parents feel welcome as well as upholding an ethos of good moral values.

Each of the findings will be briefly discussed below:

• Communication between teachers and parents

The research study established that the school communicates effectively with parents about their children’s academic progress and behaviour. It was confirmed in the study that the different communication methods the school applies help parents and the school to communicate better and parents know what is happening at the school. Teachers realise the importance of effective communication hence they make an extra effort by doing home visits at least once per term. The school became more solution orientated when they devised strategies to overcome the language
barrier experienced at the school. The finding concluded that effective communication is an indicator of a positive school climate.

- **Positive working relationships between teachers and parents/community members**

In the analysis it was evident that the involvement of parents and community members improved the relationship with the principal and teachers at the school. It also improved the relationship between parent and child at home. The finding of the research study concluded that good working relationships between all stakeholders create a positive school climate.

- **Opportunities for involvement in school activities**

Findings derived from the data analysis show that most parents and community members would not involve themselves in the school’s affairs if they are not invited to do so. The finding in the investigation is that the school has explored various avenues to include parents and community members in the activities of the school. A discovery made in the study is that the creation of opportunities encourages parents and community members to be involved in the school. It was found in the study that the skills-building programme was an excellent way of engaging the community and simultaneously alleviating some of the social problems experienced in the community. Parents and community members are empowered by the programmes, training and workshops offered which in turn give them self-confidence and increase their self-esteem. The visibility of parents and community members ensure that there is less disciplinary problems by learners and ensures that teachers are fully prepared for their lessons. A fact in the study is that all the volunteers at the school are unemployed and the reward of a monthly stipend is a big motivator for parents/community members to be involved. The finding of the research study concluded that inviting parents to participate and creating opportunities for involvement contributes to a school climate where parent/community members feel wanted and needed.
• Providing a healthy and safe environment for learners, parents and community members

The inquiry confirmed that the school is a health promoting school, and therefore parents and community members feel safe and has the assurance that they and their children will be medically attended to. The health policy ensures the physical and mental wellness of the whole school community. It was found in the study that the community shows their appreciation by supporting school projects and by safeguarding the school building and premises. The study revealed that the school engages in a lot of community outreach programmes. Regular workshops and training programmes to parent/community members empower them with knowledge and lifelong skills, which motivates them to remain involved in the school’s activities. The finding concluded that a healthy and safe environment is a prerequisite for a positive school environment.

• A school policy regarding parent and community involvement at the school

The empirical study found that the majority of teachers and parent/community members were not trained or taught how to involve parents in the education of their children, but it did not deter them not to be involved. The study established that the school policy on parental and community involvement gives structure and provides guidance to all the programmes the school offers. The investigation discovered that the school governing body has an influence on school policy and the policy is reviewed and amended annually. The finding of the research concluded that involving SGB parents in policy-development gives them power and increased confidence, which contributes to a positive school climate.

• A friendly and welcoming school atmosphere

It is evident in the study that the school has intentionally created a warm and kind atmosphere upon entering the administration block. This finding together with an open-door policy, has contributed to parents and community members feeling
welcome and comfortable when visiting the school. The research concluded that a warm, friendly and helpful atmosphere leads to a positive school climate. The study concluded that the ‘hospitality’ shown from the school side has a positive effect on the school climate and encourages parents and community members to show an interest and be involved in the school.

- **Ethos of the school**

The investigation established that the school respects the culture, language and ethnicity of all parents and community members. The school ascribes to the values of cooperation, respect, obedience, diligence and loyalty. The school staff members are exemplary and good role models for the learners, parents and rest of the community. This finding of the study concluded that good moral values and non-discriminatory attitudes lead to good relations and a positive school climate.

**Findings in terms of strategies that could increase parent and community involvement at schools** are: regular and effective communication, creating opportunities for involvement, inviting parents, make them feel welcome, motivation, visionary leadership and proper planning.

Each of the findings will be briefly discussed below:

- **Regular and effective communication**

In the research inquiry it is confirmed that an open channel of communication between the school and parent/community members increases parental and community development. The school in the research study applies both oral and written communication methods to invite and inform parents about the child’s progress. These types of communication methods keep parents updated and engaged in happenings at the school. The research concluded that regular and effective communication strengthens a connection between the parent and the school, resulting in increased parental involvement in the child’s education.
• Creating opportunities for parents to be involved

It was discovered that opportunities created for parents/community members to be involved compel them to communicate with teachers at the school. Regular communication results in an improved relationship with each other. The study concluded that creating opportunities keep parents/community members motivated to stay involved in the activities at the school.

• Inviting parents to be involved and make them feel welcome

The investigation concluded that inviting parents is a successful strategy of involving parents in school matters because it makes them feel welcome and needed.

• Motivation

The finding concluded that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation greatly affects the cooperation of all stakeholders and it positively leads to the increase of parents and volunteers from the community.

• Leadership and planning

A finding of the inquiry is that school leaders need to plan for parental involvement because proper planning prevents poor performance of everyone who is involved in the programme. The research concluded that a visionary school leader, together with a motivated staff, is vital for the survival of any school improvement programme.

Findings in terms of benefits of family and community involvement at schools.

The study confirmed that when parents and community members are involved in school matters, it offers various benefits to the learners, parents, teachers and the broader community.
Each of the findings will be briefly discussed below:

- **Benefits to the learners**

  The study established the following benefits to learners when there is parent/community involvement in schools: The learner has a better relationship with the teacher as well as with his/her parent. Learners feel proud of their parents. They feel much safer knowing that a parent is around. Homework activities and school projects are regularly completed. Learners attend school more regular. Learners are motivated to go to school knowing that there are people who care about them and who will take care of them when they do not feel well. Learners are referred to the correct structures or institutions when their human rights have been violated. Learners are more disciplined and generally behave better when parents are involved in the school’s activities.

- **Benefits to the parents**

  The study established the following benefits to the parents: Parents gain firsthand experience of what’s happening in the child’s life. Parents can understand the child better and have a stronger relationship with the child. Parents can observe their child’s behaviour and see how the domestic atmosphere (microsystem) influences his/her school life (mesosystem). Parents gain insight about the dynamics of school life in general. Parents get to know and understand the teachers and form cordial relationships with them. They gain access to information and to materials giving them a better understanding of how to help their children. Parents receive training in skills-based projects empowering them with lifelong social and manual skills that they can use to secure employment or to start their own businesses. Parents become more confident and their self-esteem increase. In the research study the finding was that parents also become more confident in public speaking and increase their vocabulary of an additional language. Being involved give some parents the motivation to further their education. The study also revealed that meeting and working with other parents with similar experiences gives them a sense of belonging to a group and instils loyalty to the school.
• **Benefits to the teachers**

The study established the following benefits for teachers: Teachers get to know and understand learners, parents and the community better. Teachers can devote more time to teaching. Teachers who are assisted by teacher assistants have less administration duties. The teacher does not deal with discipline problems because they can immediately get the SGB parents to solve behaviour problems. Teachers receive help with coaching of different sporting codes. Due to the school’s involvement in community affairs, non-governmental organisations and private companies offer assistance in the form of free training, workshops, donations and sponsorships to help the school and to uplift the community.

• **Benefits to the community**

The finding of the research revealed the following benefits to the community: Community members become leaders in the community and are more active in community affairs. They develop community pride. Community problems like teenage pregnancies and substance dependency decrease. The school is informed about the problems of the community and the school then organises professional people to speak to community members about issues such as drug abuse and crime. Members of the community save on travelling expenses because the school arranged with the Department of Labour to come to the school to assist parents and community members with applications for identity documents, birth certificates, disability grants and pension applications. The community benefit by attending the workshops and training sessions companies provide to parents and members of the community.

**Reasons for non-involvement of parental and community involvement**

The research study concluded that a lack of transport, time constraints and socio-economic factors are reasons for non-involvement of parents and community members in school matters.
• **Transport/childcare**

The investigation found that some parents from poor communities do not have transport to attend school functions or meetings. The walking distance from the homes to the schools is far and unsafe. The study established that a transport constraint is one of the reasons for non-involvement of parents in the school.

It was discovered in the research that parents cannot attend meetings because they are looking after younger siblings. Some of the grandparents have to take care of their grandchildren because the parents are working away from home or have died prematurely of HIV/AIDS. The research investigation confirmed that taking care of other children is a reason why parents cannot get involved in schools.

• **Time constraints**

Some parents often have to work for long hours and are tired when they get home from work. After work they still have to attend to household responsibilities of cooking and cleaning, therefore they do not have time to help their children with school work. It was confirmed in the inquiry that some parents often do not have time and energy to involve themselves in school activities due to work obligations and/or household chores. Time constraints as a reason for non-involvement of parents were identified in the study.

• **Socio-economic factors**

Socio-economic factors such as poverty and alcohol abuse contribute to reasons for non-involvement of parents in the school activities of their children at home and/or at school. The study revealed that parents do not want to embarrass themselves or their children because they are poor. Another major finding to reasons for non-involvement is alcohol abuse. Parents who consume alcohol regularly are not good role models for their children and cannot attend to or assist in school matters because of their inability to stay sober. The research inquiry concluded that socio-
economic problems in the community such as poverty and alcohol abuse are reasons for non-involvement of parents in school matters.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to improve the school climate to increase parent/community involvement as well as recommendations for further research are provided next.

5.4.1 Recommendations to improve the school climate to increase parent/community involvement

The following recommendations are made to improve the school climate to enhance parent and community involvement.

5.4.1.1 Theme 1: The establishment of a positive school climate to improve parental and community involvement

- Communication between teachers and parents

Schools can improve their school climate by promoting positive two-way home-to-school oral and written communication.

Oral communication: Schools can organise ‘open days’ where parents can get information from teachers regarding their children’s school progress, behaviour and where parents can check workbooks. Open days and/or home visits can be scheduled during the school week for unemployed parents and over the weekend or on public holidays to accommodate parents who are employed. When communicating with parents, teachers must be cautious not to only share negative behavioural or learning problems, but also to communicate positive news about the learners' achievements and behaviour. For more contact with the parents, another recommendation would be that report cards should be collected at the end of each term by the parent accompanying the child. The language used in school meetings must be a language that the majority of the parents understand and feel comfortable
speaking. An interpreter should always be available for those that do not understand a certain language.

Written communication: Multilingual letters and newsletters will ensure that all parents understand the communication from the school. Letters must have a tear-off slip that parents must sign and send back to school as a confirmation to teachers that parents have received the information. Another recommendation is to send a year planner or term planner home which will inform parents of forthcoming meetings, open days, test and examination dates or any other school events that will take place. Homework diaries where parents and teachers read and sign every day ensure that both parties check homework activities.

- **Positive working relationships between teachers and parents/community members**

For the optimum functioning of the school, cordial relations of trust and respect should exist between the parents, community members and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal of an effective school. Separate workshops should be held for staff members and volunteers in order to identify relationship problems and to provide possible solutions to solve those problems. Good working relationships between parents, community members and teachers have positive consequences for the growth of a school.

- **Opportunities for involvement in school activities**

Schools should reach out to parents and community members by creating opportunities for them to be involved in school matters. Parents sometimes want to be involved but do not know how or where to involve themselves. When sending an invitation for participation, the request on the invitation letter must say exactly what the school’s expectation is. It may be an invitation for a parents meeting or for involvement in a school function. It is important to establish the reasons why parents did not respond and to make alternative arrangements.
The creation of opportunities makes it easier for parents to decide how they can be of assistance to the school. Workshops can be held to teach them how to help their children with schoolwork. The school can draw up a database of parents’ employment status, skills, workplace, qualifications and contact numbers. When the school requires experts in certain fields for example to balance financial records or to fix the toilets, parents could be approached for their experience in auditing or plumbing for example. Parents working at workplaces selling stationary, office furniture or paint could be approached to get goods at a discounted price.

- **Providing of a healthy and safe environment for learners, parents and community members**

The South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996 requires all schools to have a health and safety policy. These policies must not just be available at the school; it should be implemented and followed through. School management teams should establish a good relationship with the local service providing agencies such as police stations and the clinic. The school must be a safe place inside the classroom and outside on the school grounds. All broken windows and equipment must be repaired and the school grounds must be free of broken glass bottles and other litter. There must be a pedestrian crossing in the street manned by the school’s scholar patrol or by parents volunteering ensuring the safety of learners coming to school or going home.

- **A school policy regarding parent and community involvement at the school**

A school policy for involving parents in schools is essential at all schools. This policy must be well structured, written in understandable language and be regarded just as important as other school policies. It should stipulate exactly how the school is going to involve parents and community members. This policy must also set clear boundaries to what is allowed or not by parent and community volunteers. A committee handling all the affairs of the volunteers will ensure that the school leader can focus on his/her task of managing and leading the school.
• A friendly and welcoming school atmosphere

The personality, attitude and communication style of teachers could encourage an atmosphere of open communication and create a feeling of respect, acceptance, belonging and dignity. A school atmosphere where the school management team has an open-door policy will encourage parents to speak out and share issues of importance to them. Schools could either use one of the volunteering parents or employ a public relations officer specifically for the task of dealing with the public and for marketing the school. The administration block should display school achievements and school photos of staff members, learners and parents.

The receptionist is the face of the school and should always be dressed appropriately and be courteous to any person visiting the school. Attention must be given to the reception area to make it attractive and welcoming to visitors at the school.

• Ethos of the school

In order to improve the ethos of the school and create a climate for effective teaching and learning, a good working relationship, a positive atmosphere and visionary leadership skills are needed. Heritage days where learners dress according to their culture can result in dialectical conversations and information sharing about different cultures. Teachers should behave morally correct at all times because learners look up to them as their role-models.

5.4.1.2 Theme 2: Strategies that could increase parent and community involvement at schools

Schools have multiple options to enhance school climate and increase parental involvement for a more positive learning experience. The following interventions could be applied to improve school climate:
Opportunities for effective communication between parents and schools must be arranged on a regular basis. It is the duty of the school to promote harmonious relationships between parents and teachers. Schools should create opportunities for parents to be involved. Schools must reach out and invite parents, but also make them feel welcome when they do attend school functions. Parents who are involved should be motivated to stay involved. This can be done by complimenting them on achievements, expressing appreciation and gratitude and also networking with suitable people who can organise stipends and food parcels.

5.4.1.3 Theme 3: Benefits of family and community involvement in schools

- **Benefits to the learners**

In Life Orientation classes, teachers must emphasise morals and values. Lessons on self-esteem and self development should be presented to learners. Troubled learners or learners with discipline or behaviour problems must be referred to professional people like social workers and psychologists. Learners who struggle academically should receive remedial classes. All learners must slot into an extra-curricular activity or join a sports group. This will keep learners busy after school hours so that they do not get into trouble and it will also teach them life skills like teamwork, hard work and communication skills.

- **Benefits to the parents**

Parents should be welcomed in the school and not be treated as visitors or only called for negative behaviour of the child. Schools should have regular meetings with parents and communicate to parents that their involvement and support make a great difference in their children's school performance. School meetings and home visits should be organised at times suitable to the parents. Schools should provide transport for parents to attend school meetings who do not have their own transport. Schools should provide orientation, training and workshops for parents regarding assistance and monitoring of learning activities at home as well as parental involvement in the school. Training in specialised skills like bricklaying, sewing,
plumbing could be provided to unemployed parents and community members. ABET classes should be given to illiterate parents and community members. Parents’ connections with friends, family and in their workplaces could be utilised to add value to the school.

- **Benefits to the teachers**

Schools should make special efforts to engage all parents in the involvement of the education of their children. Schools should run workshops for parents on creating suitable conditions at home and train parents in how to help their children at home with schoolwork. Schools must not rely on inviting parents to school meetings by merely sending a letter home. Schools should attempt other ways of inviting parents such as announce details of school meetings in churches, put notices up at local businesses, or on community boards and make use of flyers and pamphlets or announcing details of the meeting from a public address system. Notification of school meetings should be done well in advance, so that parents and teachers can plan properly. Schools can organise venues for school meetings at church halls or community halls closer to the areas where learners stay.

Schools should establish a committee that deals with all aspects related to parent and community involvement at the school. The committee should be monitored by the SGB and the leader of the school. The school should provide a physical location on the school premises where volunteers can meet and report for duty daily and from there move to their respective venues where they volunteer at. Schools should have meetings with volunteers who are involved, identify problems and must eliminate incorrect assumptions parents and teachers may hold about one another's attitudes and abilities. The limits of parent and community involvement must be clearly set out in these meetings. Teachers were trained and are paid by the state and should therefore be in charge of the formal learning process. Volunteer teacher assistants should play a secondary role in the classroom.
• **Benefits to the community**

Local clinics, libraries, shops, community centres and churches could provide valuable resources that could be of assistance to the school. Educational resources should be made available to equip unemployed members of the community with knowledge and skills so that they can assist the school in the education of children.

5.4.1.4 Theme 4: Reasons for non-involvement of parent and community members in school activities

• **Lack of transport and childcare**

Schools should consider and accommodate parents who have no transport or have to use public transport. Parents must be informed of the school’s plans early each term so that they can diarise important dates to make early arrangements. Schools can arrange transportation from home to school and back again. Schools could also get a child-minder who looks after the smaller children and keeps them occupied while the parent attends the meeting.

• **Time constraints**

Meetings and any other functions must be arranged at a suitable time and place convenient for the majority of parents. The school should accommodate employed parents after work or during weekends. Teachers should schedule home visits when parents are present. In serious cases, teachers can also go to the workplace of the parent to discuss the behaviour or scholastic performance of the learner. Technologically advanced parents and teachers can also arrange and have meetings ‘online’ by making use of conference calls or ‘Skype’.

• **Socio-economic factors**

Schools should apply for donations or sponsorships to businesses so that parents and community members may receive ‘payment’ in the form of stipends, food parcels
or gift vouchers. Volunteers helping out at the school can get some of the produce from the vegetable garden for free or at a minimal charge. Most of the parents are poor and unemployed, so schools can provide parents with a meal when they attend the meetings or school functions. Schools can collect clothes and distribute it to poor parents and children. Parents, who have an alcohol dependency problem, can be referred to the structures that deal with it such as AA (Alcoholic Anonymous).

5.4.2 Recommendations for further research

The following aspects could be investigated further:

- An investigation can be logged to investigate and explore the role of the school leader (Principal) in enhancing parental and community involvement by undertaking a quantitative study amongst a large percentage of parents and community members related to the identified school.

- A research study could be undertaken to investigate the role of the school climate in enhancing parent and community involvement in high/secondary schools.

- A mixed-method investigation of the impact of parent and community involvement on the academic performance and achievement of learners.

- An Action Research study could be conducted where a researcher would work with a few schools and manage the process of involving parents and members of the community in the school and then report on the findings of the action research process.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

A limitation to this study was the small sample used by the researcher, which is typical of qualitative research aiming to provide an in-depth description. The school in this study was limited to a certain suburb in Port Elizabeth and therefore these
results may only be generalised to schools with similar demographics. The gender of the respondents was predominately female. The small sample of males used in this research may make it hard for this study to generalise to schools with higher percentages of males. The research study focussed on parents and community members actively involved daily on the school premises. It did not focus on parents who also play an active role in the child’s education at home.

Despite these limitations, the data gathered from the research contributed to a better understanding of the value of a positive school climate in enhancing the involvement of parents and community members at the school.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This thesis emphasised the importance of a positive school climate in promoting parent and community involvement in schools. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory and Joyce Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres highlighted the interdependence between the family, school, and community on the development and school outcomes of the learner.

In this case study an interpretivistic paradigm was used and a qualitative methodology employed. Data was collected by using semi-structured interview schedules and pre-designed questionnaires including open and closed questions. Purposive sampling was used. Careful measures were taken to ensure reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the study.

The study provided strategies that could be applied to enhance meaningful parent involvement such as creating a positive school climate to improve the school atmosphere, ensuring that effective communication takes place which will result in a harmonious relationship between parent and teacher.

The findings of the study and recommendations provided are of significant value to improve parent and community involvement at schools.
REFERENCE LIST


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Thomas, J.C. 2002. *Microsoft @ Encarta @ Encyclopaedia 2002*.


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ADDENDUM A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Opening

A. Establish Rapport
My name is Jacqueline Cloete. I am registered at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University for my Masters studies in Education. The title of my research is: A case study: The role of a positive school climate in the enhancement of parental and community involvement.

I have acquired permission from the Department of Education as well as the principal to conduct research at your school. I decided to interview you as you are a principal and or teacher at the school.

B. Purpose
I would like to ask you some questions about community involvement at this school, your experiences and also your ideas and recommendation for continued success and improvement at other schools.

C. Motivation
I hope to use this information to give guidance to other schools and the department of Education to implement your strategies at other schools to enhance best practice at other schools.

D. Time line
The interview should take about 30 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

E. Transition
Let me begin by asking you some general questions about your teaching background.

Thank you for your time.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL, SMT AND TEACHERS

General biographic information

1. How old are you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>20-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>36-40</th>
<th>41-45</th>
<th>46-50</th>
<th>51-55</th>
<th>56-60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. What qualification do you have?

- Teaching diploma
- Teaching degree
- Post Graduate certificate
- B. Ed Honours
- Masters degree in education
- Doctors degree in education
- Other

3. Years of teaching experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Range</th>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>36-40</th>
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</thead>
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4. How long have you been at this school?

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<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>1-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>36-40</th>
<th>30+years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Interview Questions for Principal, SMT and teachers

1. Have you received any training in working with parents?
2. What type of training did you receive?
3. What was parent and community involvement like traditionally?
4. How did parents and community involvement change over the years?
5. What are some of the reasons that the school decided to try to increase parent and community involvement?
6. What is the current status of parent and community involvement at this school?
7. In your opinion, is the level of parent and community involvement at your school satisfactory? Why or why not?
8. Why should family and community be connected to schools?
9. How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?
10. What do you consider the most successful projects regarding community involvement so far?
11. Which strategies/events/activities do you consider effective in increasing parent and community involvement?
12. What do you see as barriers for staff members to parent and community involvement?
13. What do you see as barriers for parents and community members to increasing parent and community involvement?
14. How do/did the school deal with some of these barriers for staff members?
15. How do/did the school deal with some of these barriers for parents and community members?
16. What more could staff, parents and community members do to increase parent and community involvement?
17. What would you hope to see take place this school year with parent and community involvement in addition to what you have already put into place?
18. What are the advantages of family and community involvement in schools?
ADDENDUM B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Opening

  A. Establish Rapport
My name is Jacqueline Cloete. I am registered at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University for my Masters studies in Education. The title of my research is: A case study: The role of a positive school climate in the enhancement of parental and community involvement.

I have acquired permission from the Department of Education as well as the principal to conduct research at your school. I decided to interview you as you are a parent and or community member.

  B. Purpose
I would like to ask you some questions about community involvement at this school, your experiences and also your ideas and recommendation for continued success and improvement at other schools.

  C. Motivation
I hope to use this information to give guidance to other schools and the department of Education to implement your strategies at other schools to enhance best practice at other schools.

  D. Time line
The interview should take about 30 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

  E. Transition
Let me begin by asking you some general questions about your teaching background.

Thank you for your time.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

General biographic information

1. How old are you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>36-40</th>
<th>41-45</th>
<th>46-50</th>
<th>51-55</th>
<th>56-60</th>
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2. What is your role in the school?

- Parent
- Grandparent
- Volunteer
- Other

3. Years of involvement

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<tr>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>36-40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. How did you become involved at this school?

- Request by a teacher
- Own initiative
- Child’s request
- Need at school
- Request by SGB
- Request by other parents
- Other
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE PARENTS and COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. Specifically in what areas are you involved in the activities of the school?

2. How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?

3. Have you received any training in school involvement?

4. How do you see your role as a parent or a member of the community?

5. What role does parents and community members play in the governance of the school?

6. What factors affect your involvement in the school?

7. Are there any factors that hamper your involvement as a parent or community member?

8. What changes would you recommend to improve the involvement of parents and community members?

9. What do you see as barriers to parent and community involvement?

10. How do the school deal with some of these barriers?

11. What more could staff, parents and community members do to remove the barriers?

12. In your opinion, is the level of parent and community involvement at the school satisfactory? Why or why not?

13. Which strategies/events/activities do you consider effective in increasing parent and community involvement at the school?

14. What types of things do you think affect the involvement of other parents and members of the community?

15. How can school management more effectively deal with barriers to parent and community involvement?

16. Can you make any suggestions that can help to improve the role played by parents in governing bodies?

17. Have you been previously involved in the activities at any other school?
18. Are you involved in any other community based-, non-governmental- or political organisation?

19. Why do you think it is important for family and community to be connected to schools?

20. What are the benefits of family and community connections?
ADDENDUM C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS/COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Your school has been selected to participate in a study that forms part of my Masters degree in Educational Research at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about your school, relevant to my research title:

**A case study: The role of a positive school climate in the enhancement of parent and community involvement at a best practice school.**

The information provided will be treated anonymously and privately. Your participation is voluntarily and you may withdraw at any time. Please provide the information requested as honestly as possible.

**DIRECTIONS:**
Section A is open-ended questions. Section B and C are statements about your school. Please indicate the extent to which each statement characterises your school by putting a cross (x) in the appropriate box.
A. BENEFITS OF SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

1. What benefits do active school involvement of parents and community members have on the child/learner?

2. What benefits do school involvement of parents and community members have on the parent?

3. What benefits do school involvement of parents and community members have on the school and teachers?

4. What effects do school involvement of parents and community members have on the community?
## B. REASONS FOR NON-INVolVEMENT OF PARENTS/COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### 1. Transport/Childcare

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<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents cannot attend school activities because they do not have transport/bus fare.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>The school arranges transport for parents to attend school meetings and other school/sport gatherings.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Parents cannot come to school meetings because there is no-one to look after younger children at home.</td>
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Any other reasons

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### 2. Communication and language

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<th>AGREE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is a one-way communication from school to home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents are illiterate and cannot read and understand the communication letters brought home by the children.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Meetings are held in a language that most parents do not understand and cannot express themselves in.</td>
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Any other reasons

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3. History of relationship with school

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents believe that teachers are trained and it is their duty to educate the children.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Parents do not know what schools expect from them or how they can meaningfully involve themselves.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Schools are for children and teachers so parents and community members must not get interfere.</td>
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Any other reasons

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4. Cultural differences

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The school promotes the predominant culture at the school. (eg. Afrikaans- speaking Coloured people)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents and community members do not want to get involved in schools because their culture differs from the culture of teachers.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The school participates in different cultural activities such as heritage day and celebrate different cultural activities (food, music, customs, clothing)</td>
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Any other reasons

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5. Beliefs about disability

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<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents believe that they do not have any skills that may help the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Illiterate and disabled parents believe that they are not able to help the school in any way.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The school invites all people to participate regardless of their disability.</td>
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Any other reasons

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6. Perception that professionals are experts whose opinions cannot be challenged

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents do not want to challenge teachers fearing that their child may be disadvantaged by this.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teachers have all the knowledge and cannot be challenged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Only literate parents may raise their opinions.</td>
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Any other reasons

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7. Time constraints

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<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents/community members do not have time to attend to school matters. (working/looking after other children)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The school sets a suitable time and place for meetings to take place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parent meetings take place during school hours.</td>
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</table>
8. Socio-economic factors

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<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents are poor and are afraid that schools will ask them for money.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents are not employed and cannot work voluntarily (freely) at the school.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Poor and illiterate parents do not want to embarrass themselves and their children.</td>
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</table>

Any other reasons

C. SCHOOL CLIMATE

1. Communication

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The school communicates effectively with parents about their child/children’s academic progress and behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The opinions of parents/community members are valued and respected when communicating with teachers at the school.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The school provides adequate notification about school events and activities.</td>
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2. Relationship

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<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The school has a good relationship with parents/community members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents/community members are not afraid to say something and worry that it will disadvantage the child.</td>
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</table>
There is mutual respect of teachers and parents/community members.

### 3. Opportunities for involvement

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<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The school provides enough opportunities for parents/community members to be involved.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The school staff members encourage parents/community members to be involved in school activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The school empowers parents to be involved in school activities.</td>
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### 4. Healthy and safe environment

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The school provides a safe environment for parents/community members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The school grounds and buildings are in a good condition.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The school promotes healthy practices eg. no-smoking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. School policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is a policy regarding parent/community involvement at the school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is a policy regarding health and safety at the school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The School governing body has an influence on school policy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. School atmosphere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents/community members are treated with respect and dignity at the school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents/community members feel comfortable visiting the school at any time without making an appointment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The school atmosphere is not friendly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Welcome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The school provides a welcoming atmosphere to parents/community member volunteers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The office staff is courteous, friendly and helpful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There are specific people assigned to welcoming visitors at the school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Invitations to participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parents/community members are regularly invited to attend meetings and to get involved in the school's activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents/community members who are involved in activities are motivated to stay involved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parents/community members are not invited to involve themselves in the school's activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Ethos of the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DIS-AGREE</th>
<th>DO NOT KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The school respects the culture, language and race of all parents/community members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The school portrays human values of respect, trust, dignity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The school staff members are exemplary and good role models for the community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any other comments about the school climate

Thank you for your cooperation and time
ADDENDUM D

20 June 2011
Ms J Cloete / Dr C Jordaan
Education Faculty
NMMU

Dear Ms Cloete / Dr Jordaan

A CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN A BEST PRACTICE SCHOOL IN PORT ELIZABETH

Your above-entitled application for ethics approval was approved by the Faculty Research, Technology and Innovation Committee of Education (ERTIC) meeting on 15 June 2011.

We take pleasure in informing you that the application was approved by the Committee.

The ethics clearance reference number is H11-EDU-ITE-025.

We wish you well with the project. Please inform your co-investigators of the outcome, and convey our best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Ms J Elliott-Gentry
Secretary: ERT
ADDENDUM E

Ms J. Cloete
Researcher
c/o Dr C. Jordaan
Faculty of Education
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Fax: 0415042822

Dear Ms Cloete

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN DEPARTMENTAL SCHOOLS: PORT ELIZABETH

I refer to your letter dated 29 March 2011 and received on 19 May 2011.

Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct your research on the following conditions:

1. Your research must be conducted on a voluntary basis.
2. All ethical issues relating to research must be honoured.
3. Your research is subject to the internal rules of the school, including its curriculum programme and its code of conduct and must not interfere in the day-to-day routine of the school.

Kindly present a copy of this letter to the principal as proof of permission.

I wish you good luck in your research.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

DR NYATHI NTSIKO
DISTRICT DIRECTOR: PORT ELIZABETH

20 May 2011
Investigating the role of a positive school climate in the improvement of parent and community involvement in a primary school.

School Principal Consent Form

I give consent for you to approach educators to participate in the investigating the role of a positive school climate in the improvement of parent and community involvement in a primary school.

I have read the Project Information Statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that:

- The role of the school is voluntary
- I may decide to withdraw the school’s participation at any time without penalty
- Educators, parents and community members will be invited to participate and permission will be sought from them.
- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.
- The school will not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- A report of the findings will be made available to the school.
- I may seek further information on the project from Jacqueline Cloete on 0844136275.

[Signatures]

Principal

Signature
ADDENDUM G

NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER’S DETAILS

| Title of the research project | A Case study: The role of school climate in the enhancement of parental and community development at a best practice school. |
| Reference number              | H11-EDU-ITE-025 |
| Principal investigator        | Jacqueline Cloete |
| Address                       | 64 Nicholas Road, Schauderville, Port Elizabeth |
| Postal Code                   | 6016 |
| Contact telephone number      | 084 413 6275 |

A. DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANT

I, the participant and the undersigned (full names)

ID number

OR

I, in my capacity as (teacher, parent or community member) of the participant (full names)

ID number

Address (of participant)

A.1 HEREBY CONFIRM AS follows:

I, the participant, was invited to participate in the above-mentioned research project
that is being undertaken by Jacqueline Cloete
From NMMU Education faculty
of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME, THE PARTICIPANT:</th>
<th>Initial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Aim:</td>
<td>The investigator is studying school climate and family and community involvement in the school. The information will be used to help increase the parental involvement of family and community members at their schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Procedures:</td>
<td>I understand that the researcher will do an Interview and use a questionnaire to find information for the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Risks:</td>
<td>No risks involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Possible benefits:</td>
<td>As a result of my participation in this study I can help my school and other schools in the community to increase family and community involvement in the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Confidentiality:</td>
<td>My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Access to findings:</td>
<td>Any new information or benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Voluntary participation / refusal / discontinuation:</td>
<td>My participation is voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect my present or future care / employment / lifestyle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. THE INFORMATION ABOVE WAS EXPLAINED TO ME/THE PARTICIPANT BY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(name of relevant person)</th>
<th>Initial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in Afrikaans</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and I am in command of this language, or it was satisfactorily translated to me by

(name of translator)

I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.

### 4. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participation and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage without penalisation.

### 5. Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to myself.

### B. STATEMENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(name of interviewer)</th>
<th>declare that:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have explained the information given in this document to (name of patient/participant) and / or his / her representative (name of representative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. He / she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And no translator was used OR this conversation was translated into (language) by (name of translator)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have detached Section D and handed it to the participant YES NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signed/confirmed at on 20

Signature of interviewer Signature of witness:

Full name of witness:
Dear participant/representative of the participant

Thank you for your/ the participant’s participation in this study. Should, at any time during the study:

- an emergency arise as a result of the research, or
- you require any further information with regard to the study, or
- the following occur

(Indicate any circumstances which should be reported to the investigator)

Kindly contact

| at telephone number | (It must be a number where help will be available on a 24 hour basis, if the research project warrants it) |