A STUDY OF PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS: ZWELITSHA TOWNSHIP, PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the treatise hereby submitted by me for the Master of Public Administration at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is my own work and I have never submitted it in any other university or technikon for the purposes of degree or diploma. I further cede copyright of the treatise in favour of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

N Zuma
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Most of all, I thank my Heavenly Father for the strength, courage and wisdom He gave me throughout the years of my study.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this treatise to my daughter Khuselwa Zuma who has been supportive during the course of the study.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This study investigates parental involvement in school governance in selected high schools in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town District in the Eastern Cape Province. The research study was conducted in three high schools in Zwelitsha Township. These schools are Nompendulo Senior Secondary, Thembalabantu High School and Xolani Senior Secondary School.

Questionnaires were designed and distributed to the principals, educators and parents whose children are learners in these schools. The interview questions were designed and distributed to parents whose children are learners in these selected schools, educators and school principals and members of the school governing body from each school. Respondents were asked about the levels of parental involvement in their schools, parents' awareness of school governance and the relationship between schools and communities. However, the objectives of the study were to:

- Assess parental involvement in school governance in selected high schools in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town District in the Province of the Eastern Cape;
- To determine the nature and extent of parental participation in school academic activities;
- To examine the role of parents in the school governing body;
- To determine measures that can be taken to encourage the participation of parents in school governance

These objectives have been achieved by providing empirical evidences which shows that the levels of parental involvement in the previously disadvantaged high schools are very low. This is related to the parents’ level of education. Parents who are literate are more involved than those who are illiterate. This research also reveals that high
levels of working parents contributes to the low levels of parental involvement in school governance. Most parents in this area know nothing about school governance and those that are aware are not keen to be involved. The class structure of the society has an influence in the participation of parents in school governance. Parents’ meetings that are held on Sunday afternoon are a challenge to parents that come from the villages outside Zwelitsha because of the scarcity of transport on this day. and these situations discourage them from being actively involved in their children’s education.

The study provides the factors that cause non-involvement of parents in school governance. Subsequently, the following strategies for participation of parents in school governance were given:

- Capacitating of parents
- Establishment of teacher-parent collegiality
- Recognition of cultural capital
- Establishment of parent organisations
- Utilisation of non-governmental organisations
- Establishment of centres of learning.

This study also indicates the following strategies that may assist to enhance the parental involvement in school governance:

- Parents engagement and empowerment
- Co-operation between schools and parents
- Collaboration with other community, private and other public institutions
- Invitation of complaints and welcoming of criticism.

In conclusion, the findings provide clear indication that the participation of parents in school governance is low. Recommendations that could assist the schools to encourage and to enhance parents to participate in school governance are given.
ABSTRACT

In Chapter 1 the introduction, background and rationale to the study, the statement of the problem as well as the definition of terms were given.

In Chapter 2 the literature on school governance was reviewed. The participation of parents in school governance was explored. The first section of the chapter explained the school governance as a concept making reference to the South African Schools Act, 1996. The second section dealt with the importance of parental involvement in school governance and the last section provided the mechanism of promoting participation in school governance.

Chapter 3 dealt with the strategies of encouraging the participation of parents in the school governance proposed. The causes of non-parental involvement were discussed before proposing the strategies.

Chapter 4 was focusing on the research methodology, the data collection and the interpretation of data. The study made use of interview questionnaire which was distributed to the educators and parents whose children are studying in the three randomly selected high schools in the Zwelitsha, King William’s Town District. The data was interpreted and presented making use of bar charts and pie charts.

Chapter 5 dealt with the findings, conclusion and recommendations drawn from the secondary and primary information. Findings were categorised as follows:

- Levels of parental involvement
- Class structure of the society
- Days of parents’ meeting and school activities
- Lack of knowledge about school governance
- Limited interaction between schools and communities

Based on the findings of the secondary and empirical research the following strategies that can be used by schools to enhance parental involvement were recommended:

- Engaged parents with the aim of empowering them
- The co-operation between schools and parents
- Collaboration with the community, private and other public institutions
- Invitation of complaints and welcoming of criticisms
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The education management system in South Africa has been affected by many societal changes after 1994. These changes included the restructuring and redesigning of education including its movement away from the segregated arrangement for parents from their children’s schools to the educational environment that is inclusive and supportive. This has been done with the hope that it will strengthen governance in South African schools. This research seeks to assess whether parents from the previously disadvantaged areas are taking advantage of this participatory governance system.

This research brings together the findings of data collected from three participating high schools in Zwelitsha. The areas of concern include the access to information, parental participation in school governing bodies and school activities. The last section makes recommendations and draws conclusions.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

South Africa’s school system has its historical segregation and its undemocratic governance deeply affected by apartheid. The Bantu Education system was designed to produce learners who could only do certain types of jobs. However, the purpose and ownership of schools has since changed, and parental involvement in school governance is emerging as an important ingredient in a child’s development. The new education system which came into being in 1996 is intended to correct the anomalies of the previous system which were based on racial inequality and segregation at of all South African schools.

There might be different perspectives, values and beliefs about the purpose of schooling, but, whatever it is, it revolves around assisting learners to become responsible citizens during and after their school days so that they can build a strong society. Among the imperatives for the new education system was the
review of the structure of the school system, the governance and funding of schools. After the democratic elections in 1994, it was realised that South Africa's history of apartheid and unfair discrimination which resulted in unequal schooling and discriminatory education system, needed to be transformed. A school is an entity of the education system.

Every nation has its own distinctive system which is unique to that particular nation, but tied to some representative educational pattern. The South African educational system is influenced by the Western tradition, but it has many facets that are unique to its own environment and culture. A school should be structured in such a way that it accommodates the needs of the society. It is an institution that belongs to the public; it belongs to the parents and community it serves. Schools are also funded by taxpayers' money which makes them even more accountable to the general public. Parents, as voters and taxpayers, have a right to address the needs of the school and even to the extent of drafting the school curriculum.

If parents can be full participants in school governance, the major school developmental challenges of integration such as, a supportive environment, good community relations and ownership may be achieved. From 1994 the management of the education system in South Africa has operated at four levels, i.e., National, Provincial, District and Local levels. All schools at all levels are managed according to the policies laid down by the Department of Education and the School Governing Body. The Minister of Basic Education and the Member of the Executive Council are responsible for overseeing the National Department of Education and the Provincial Department of Education, respectively.

The school is managed by the Principal who is responsible for the professional management of the school. This includes the administration and organisation of teaching, learning and the performance of the departmental responsibilities that are prescribed by education laws. The Principal, the Deputy Principal and Heads of different Departments, within a school, work hand in glove with each other and they are referred to as the School Management team. School Managers have to deal with both internal and external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders, in
this case, are the staff members and learners, while the external stakeholders are the parents, educator trade unions, service providers and the wider community.

Before the democratic elections in 1994 it was difficult for school managers to involve external stakeholders in the school governance because of the manner in which the School Governing Bodies were structured. The majority of the public did not and were not allowed to vote in schools during the School Governing Body election process. Therefore, they were unable to influence the administration and management of the schools. During the apartheid era, the Department of education had three models that differentiated schools from each other. These were, Model A, B and C schools whereby the previously advantaged White schools were categorised as Model C schools.

A Model C school was the one that received a state subsidy, but had to raise the balance of its budget through school fees and donations. These were the only schools that were able to encourage and influence parents to participate in school governance and in the education of their children. Participation is the cornerstone of democracy. Section 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 provides for community participation. It is for this reason that parents and children from the previously disadvantaged areas also abide by this provision. There should be collaboration between families, schools and communities to form a complete professional climate of schools.

This collaboration may improve the effectiveness in decision-making and the efficiency in planning so as to develop creative approaches to the development of the whole school. The participation of parents may assist educators in exercising discipline in schools. Parents have a challenge of influencing learners positively so that they can identify themselves with norms and values of the school and their communities. Learners have to be responsible citizens, so that when they become adults, they can be used by the external customers. External customers, in this case are the recipients of products and services provided by the school.

Parents, business enterprises and various governmental departments also form part of the external customers. If parents, as customers can accept co-ownership
and create a climate which is conducive for success, the schools from previously disadvantaged areas will be able to move forward.

The issue at stake in this regard is the inclusion of parents in the school governance which, if addressed, would provide an opportunity for all members of the school community and civil community to exercise their democratic rights and to become actively involved in the transformation of education in their schools. Without the active involvement of all stakeholders in education, the vision of quality education cannot be realised.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The researcher is an educator and is affected by the non-participation of parents in school governance in the previously disadvantaged schools. South Africa is confronted with multiple challenges as it takes its place in a changed geopolitical landscape. The state of affairs requires that the education that is given to learners should be developmental to the community because it should be influenced by the needs of the community. It should also be responsive to the needs of the market, because it will be influenced by the needs of the community and the market.

The tendency of vandalising school buildings will be prevented because the community will be responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure. Above all, recommendations that will emanate from this study will encourage parents to participate in the governance of schools in and around the Zwelitsha District. Parents must have contact with schools so that schools can also be committed to social responsibility as they are responsible for the behaviour of their community members. In terms of Section 16 (1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996(Act 84 of 1996), the emphasis is more on the decentralisation of power to different stakeholders of whom the parents and learners form the significant part.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Looking at the situation in Zwelitsha, high schools in this area are fed and supported by villages, informal settlements and squatter camps in and outside Zwelitsha. Parents from areas outside Zwelitsha might lack commitment and a
sense of ownership, as they are not part of the Zwelitsha community in which these schools are located. It is for this reason that it was decided to undertake a study to assess and report on parental involvement in school governance in selected high schools in Zwelitsha. The problem to be investigated concerns arguments and debates regarding school governance by investigating the nature, extent, costs and benefits of the participation of parents in school governance.

The following are the research questions:

- What is the nature and extent of the participation of parents in school governance?
- Are parents clear about their expected role in school governance?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of this participation?
- Which measures can be taken to encourage the participation of parents in school governance?

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

Parents’ social background and educational experience have a considerable influence on their participation in school activities, especially their effectiveness in dealing with educators and school administrators. Low levels of parental involvement in school governance are caused by their anxieties which are related to a lack of knowledge in school academic activities and governance.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research, therefore, is aimed at investigating ways and means of promoting high levels of parental involvement in school governance in the previously disadvantaged schools.

The objectives of this research are to:

- Assess parental involvement in school governance in selected high schools in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town District in the Province of the Eastern Cape;
- To determine the nature and extent of parental participation in school academic activities;
To examine the role of parents in the School Governing Body;
To determine measures that can be taken to encourage the participation of parents in school governance

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY
Non-parental involvement in school governance, especially in the previously disadvantaged high schools is a national cry, but for the purpose of the study, this research will be limited to high schools in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town District in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The validity of this research will depend on the choice of the methods that will be used to collect data. In social sciences the two research methodologies that are usually used are qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

According to Bryman (1995:3) qualitative research was proposed since its practitioners would be able to get closer to the people they are investigating, and be less inclined to impose inappropriate conceptual frameworks on them’. A qualitative approach is used to collect information in the form of words which will give an in-depth explanation of the nature of what these parents experience. Merriam (2002:21), on the other hand, refers to qualitative research as a mix of rich, thick description and interpretation. According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:29) a qualitative methodology refers to research which produces descriptive data – generally people’s own written or spoken words.

Brynard and Hanekom (1997:29) argue that the quantitative research is associated with analytical research, and its purpose is to arrive at a universal statement. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:37) the quantitative approach relies on measurement to compare and analyse different variables. A quantitative approach does not envision any physical contact between the researcher and the subject and it is an impersonally experimental type of research. In this approach the data are expected to be precise, reliable and unequivocal.
To achieve the aim of this study the qualitative approach will be used. This will include distributing questionnaires to the parents of learners, educators and principals of the selected schools in Zwelitsha to get views on the participation of parents in the school governance.

1.9 DATA COLLECTION

In attempt to address the objectives of this research, the qualitative method of collecting data will be used. It is not always easy to ensure that participants do not to divert from the subject. Therefore, closed questionnaires will were used so that participants could be kept on the subject. These questionnaires were also drafted in Xhosa as an alternative language for those who cannot understand English, and they were used to minimise the risk of misinterpretation.

1.10 POPULATION

Three high schools from the Zwelitsha district were used in this research and the measure of freedom for both the researcher and the interviewee helped in steering of the conversation. These schools are Thembalabantu High School, Xolani Senior Secondary school and Nompendulo Senior Secondary. The parents whose children attend these three schools also formed part of the population.

1.11 SAMPLE AND SIZE

Purposive sampling sampling which is one of the types of the non-probability sampling was used. The advantage of using the convenience sampling is according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:218) that it makes no pretence of identifying a representative subset of a population. It takes people or other units that are readily available, for instance those that arrive on the scene by mere happenstance. Respondents included parents from different areas in Zwelitsha-villages, squatter camps and the township itself. Eighteen respondents were used in this research. There were three parents, who have children in the selected schools of which, one was a member of the School Governance Body from each
school, and three educators from each school, of which one was the school principal.

1.12 ANALYSIS OF DATA

In this study, data were analysed qualitatively to investigate the following:

- The interaction between parents and educators
- The attendance of school meetings by parents
- The attendance of other school activities, such as concerts, sports, competitions by parents
- Mechanisms used by educators, including the Principal to encourage parents’ participation.
- Communication between parents and learners relating to school activities.

The results were presented by making use of pie charts, graphs and tables.

1.13 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.13.1 Governance

According to the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) governance is the control or rule of an organisation. It involves an agreed policy consisting of objectives, goals, norms and values that guide and regulate the organisation. It decides on the policy and rules by which your school is organised, controlled and carried out effectively in terms of the law and budget of the school. Van Niekerk (2002: 64) defines governance as the ordering of a group or society by a public authority. The purpose of governance also includes the maintenance of law and order, the defence of society against external enemies, and the advancement of what is thought to be the welfare of a group, community, society or the state itself.

According to Africa Education Watch, “governance in education is about ensuring that the necessary resources for an efficient and effective education system are managed in a transparent and accountable manner.”
1.13.2 Community participation

Community participation allows citizens to be active participants in the decision-making process performed by the government. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1997:20) community participation is normally associated with the actions of the communities, groups or individuals in relation to development or positive change of an existing less acceptable situation. This means that that informed consent of those who are governed can be achieved through this process.

Gildenhuyys and Knipe (2000:112) define community participation as a political empowerment of all citizens in such a manner as to allow them to articulate their will and their needs directly to political representatives and public officials. According to Oakley and Marsden (1984:6) community participation includes people’s involvement in decision-making process, in implementing programmes, their sharing in the benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such efforts.

1.14 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Parental involvement and community participation will be used interchangeably in the study. This treatise is divided into five chapters as follows:

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter indicates the scope of the study and methodology.

CHAPTER 2

PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND ITS IMPORTANCE
This chapter will focus on the literature review based on the parental involvement in school governance. This chapter defines the importance of parental involvement in school governance and looks for possible ways and means to promote active parental participation.

CHAPTER 3
PROPOSED STRATEGIES OF ENCOURAGING THE PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE
In this chapter, strategies of encouraging the participation of parents in the school governance will be proposed.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION
This chapter will focus on the research methodology- the tools that will be used for the collection of data.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION
This chapter will deal with the findings, conclusion and recommendations drawn from the secondary and primary information.
CHAPTER 2

PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The involvement of parents in school governance is crucial. Schools mould the life and the future of a child, hence teachers and parents must collaborate their efforts towards creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning in order to have a high output rate, but also to ensure that learners receive quality education. Section 3(1) of the South African School Act, 1996 addresses the school governance. This Act strongly emphasises the need for parents to be full participants in school governance. It is therefore an obligation of each school governing body to ensure that education takes place in an environment that is inclusive and supportive.

This chapter will focus more on the literature review based on parental involvement in school governance. It will also look at the possible ways and means of promoting active parental participation in previously disadvantaged high schools.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

According to the South African Schools Act, 1996 school governance means determining the policy and rules by which your school is to be organised and controlled. Therefore, according to this Act, this responsibility is given to the governing body. Africa Education Watch 2010 refers to the governance in education as ensuring that the necessary resources for an efficient and affective education system - financial, material and human - are managed in a transparent and accountable manner. Governance covers all the ways that the state interacts with society - at the central, regional, local and school level - including the distribution of power in decision-making and how the decision-making affects citizens.
Van Niekerk (2002:64) further defines governance as the ordering of a group or a society by a public authority. Therefore, the purpose of governance is the advancement of what is thought to be the welfare of a group, community, society and the state itself. Graham and Amos (2003:10) further state that governance is about the more strategic aspects of steering the larger decisions about both direction and roles. Therefore, governance is not only about where to go, but also about who should be involved in deciding and in what capacity. They come up further with four zones where the concept is particularly relevant, and these are:

- Governance in global space; or global governance. This deals with issues outside the purview of individual governments.

- Governance in “national space”. This is, within a country and is sometimes understood to be the exclusive preserve of government, of which there may be several levels: national, provincial or state, indigenous, urban or local. However, governance is concerned with how other actors, such as civil society, organisations may play a role in taking decisions on matters of public concern and how different levels of government interact;

- Organisational governance (governance in “organisation space”). This comprises the activities of organisations that are usually accountable to a board of directors. Some will be privately owned and operated; e.g. business corporations. Others may be publicly owned, e.g. hospitals, schools, government corporations etc.

- Community governance (governance in “community space”): this includes activities at a local level where the organising body may not assume a legal form and where there may not be a formally constituted governing board.
The above areas show that governance is concerned with how power is exercised among the different sectors or interests in society so that traditional freedoms may be enjoyed and citizens become involved in determining matters related to the public interest, Graham and Amos (2003:11). In the context of a government, governance involves active co-operation and ongoing engagement in the process of policy formulation and implementation between politicians, senior management, front-line workers, and citizens (Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow 1997:491).

A school can adopt the governance model that is used by the government when making and implementing policies. According to Lewis and Naidoo (2004:102) school governance and decentralisation policies typically are based on theories of action that presume that the institutionalisation of local school autonomy will have broad effects on education. Examining the espoused theories of action and the theories-in-use at a programmatic level, and in terms of individuals who are involved in the governance practices, enables us to develop a better understanding of participation. Participation therefore does not only extend the right to elect representatives but also translates into the right to influence decisions.

This is in line with the declaration found in the South African Constitution that the new democracy is both representative and participatory. The resultant policies and decisions taken by a school would be effective and be in keeping with the needs of the community which a particular school is serving. Albo in Fitzgerald, et al. (1997:492) postulates that governance focuses on democratising internal work procedures, devolution of decision-making power, and incorporating civil society bodies into governance. In addition to the School Governing Bodies, schools are expected to involve parents, learners and community organisations in their governance.

According to Lewis and Naidoo (2004:101) National policy mandates, such as the South African Schools Act (SASA) are but frameworks or national architecture that provide a rubric within which actors, based on their own theories of action continually design, enact, and re-enact policy at all levels.
This design enactment and re-enactment occurs at the level of the school and within the school governing body itself. Therefore, South African schools are given an opportunity to promote participation of all stakeholders for a better contribution to the democratic transformation of this country. Section 3 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996) stipulates that one of the functions of the school governing body is to set, improve and develop the rules, direction and policy by which the school must function within the framework of the Schools Act. The School Governing Body should also bring about and develop a partnership based on trust and respect between all stakeholders, namely parents, learners, educators, other staff at the school, the local community and the education authorities.

Involving parents in school governance is not a matter of seeking power to change tradition, but to seek input from stakeholders in order to make the change meaningful and empowering. It should contribute towards good governance of schools in communities where all stakeholders will feel that they are part and parcel of the whole system of schooling and not just the business of school teachers and administrators (Boaduo, et al. 2008:98). The school is managed by the Principal who is responsible for the professional management of the school. This includes the administration and organisation of teaching, learning and the performance of the departmental responsibilities that are prescribed by education laws.

The Principal, the Deputy Principal and heads of different Departments within a school work hand in glove with each other and they are referred to as the School Management team. School managers have to deal with both internal and external stakeholders.
The diagram below presents actors in the education system

Diagram 2.1. School principal dealing with internal and external stakeholders

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

- SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
- DEPUTY PRINCIPAL
- HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Internal stakeholders

Educators

Learners

External stakeholders

Parents

community

Source: Own construction

The above model shows that school managers deal with internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are educators and learners. External stakeholders are parents and the community.

2.3 PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The structure, management and organisation of the South African education system has a direct impact on the process of teaching and learning in South African schools. Collaboration among schools, families and communities in this country is a rallying cry, but seemingly there is still a problem of not getting good ingredients for the successful collaboration in most of the previously disadvantaged high schools. This state of affairs affects the professional climate
of the school negatively. It is for this reason that it is crucial to have full community participation in the development and operation of the school programmes. During the apartheid years, education governance was a complex mixture of centralised and decentralised forms of administration and control. This kind of education system promotes a legacy of restrictive centralised control and the decision-making that is located at the highest level. It was not easy then, for parents and communities to work together with educators to strengthen the governance of Black schools.

The Apartheid education system left a legacy of an apathetic behaviour towards school governance. 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. Lewis and Naidoo (2004:100) confirm that with the increasing decentralisation of fiscal, political, and administrative responsibilities to lower levels of government, local institutions and communities, the notion of participation has taken on greater currency, emerging as a fundamental tenet in the promotion of local governance of schools.

They also argue that school governance and participation is being defined for efficiency reasons, rather than for democratic purposes. Parents’ participation is framed by what principals view as appropriate within the boundaries of supporting the efficient running of the school. Boaduo, et al. (2008:97) confirm that in our modern era of scientific and technological advancement in almost every aspect of human endeavour, there has been relentless agitation for accountability from public institutions by interested parties. In the education system this agitation is highly visible and as such parent-community involvement has been advocated. This is highly desirable because in our post-modern society we can no longer get every work in the school system effectively and efficiently done by teachers, students and school administrators alone. They further state that parent-community on one hand and the teachers, learners and school administrators on the other hand, should move towards each other to be able to address and resolve concurrent pertinent educational problems mutually. The principle of involving parents as the key stakeholders in school governance is very important,
as it is in line with the democratic ethos. Active parental and broader community involvement in school governance is central to effective learning and development in schools.

In his address to parents, the Principal of Master-Spei-School in Francistown in the North-Eastern District of Botswana, stated that, without parental support, it becomes difficult for teachers to be active in disciplining children. All these key elements are extremely important for any school to perform well academically. In many instances, students whose parents never attended meetings fail exams. (The Voice 30th March 2007:20). This proves that parental involvement in school governance is a positive influence on the progress and development of children. Parents’ engagement in the children’s education differs from parent to parent and for a variety of reasons. Some factors are associated with parents’ construction of their role and their perceptions of self efficacy whilst others are influenced by the opportunities and afforded by educators.

Parental involvement associated with pupil progress has its major effect in the home. Other forces, such as information from school might be an essential lubricant. But the key process of positive and respectful parenting can at least, in principle be learned. (Desfoges and Abouchaar 2003:50). Different parents present different capacities for parental involvement in school governance and in the education of their children. Personal attributes and social structures shape some of these capacities. Desfoges and Abouchaar (2003:42) further state that, a major factor mediating parental involvement is parental socio-economic status whether indexed by occupational class or parental (especially maternal) level of education. Desfoges and Bouchaar (2003:42) summarised three possible mechanisms through which social class might operate. These are:

- “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.

- “Social capital”, in this mechanism, working class families have less social capital in terms of social networks and skills. They do not know the ‘right
sort of people’. In consequence, regardless of disposition, working class parents either are, or feel they are, less well equipped to negotiate and deliver on the demands of schooling.

- Institutionalised barriers; schools are in this view, taken to be middle class institutions with their own values. Schools accept involvement only on their own terms which are non-negotiable. Those parents not conforming to these values are quickly ‘put in their place’.

These mechanisms have a direct impact on why some parents get involved in the education of their children and others do not get involved. These differences are further explored by the study of family factors which potentially put parental involvement at risk (Kohl, et al. 2000).

Desfoges and Abouchaar (2003:13) explain the above influence in a form of the diagram below:
Desforges and Abouchaar (2003:13) state that, in the above diagram some agencies such as clubs and associations are omitted and there are no doubts, multiple intersections between the elements which are not shown in the diagram. It might be anticipated, for example, that the quality of a school will influence the type of peer group experience a pupil might meet. As the individual pupil will influence the peer group, so will the peer group influences the individual. Figure 2 shows the key players and potential processes in shaping pupil achievement.

Family, size, structure, income and employment pattern have all been implicated as being on educational achievement and personal adjustment. Therefore, the attempt to identify the impact of parental involvement and family education on educational outcomes must proceed with the clear recognition that these
processes will be influenced by a wide range of other factors and, at the same time, will work through a range of intervening processes. Gonzalez-DeHass and Williams (2002:85) state that parental involvement in public schools has been documented as academically beneficial by educational researchers, supported politically, and valued by many educators and individuals in the general public. Parents should participate in school governance through school project identification, skills transfer, representation on school project steering committees and school development. The inclusion of parents in their children’s education provides the opportunity for all members of the school community to plan and develop creative approaches to the whole school development.

Section 4(m) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27of 1996) stipulates that community participation in the development of an education policy should be realised as one of the guiding principles in education. Schools alone cannot provide learners with the necessary resources and support they need so that they can be successful students and responsible citizens in a democratic society. Fullan (2001:198) states that, the closer is the parent to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement. This shows that a positive input from all stakeholders in the education system including parents, can make a meaningful change and contribution towards quality service and good governance of schools.

Educators can do their best in reforming the behaviour of learners and assist them in their aspirations and achievements during the day, but all their good work could be swiftly undone overnight, over the weekend and during school holidays by unsupportive aspects of their communities. During the process of educating and teaching, educators groom and encourage good behaviour on the part of the learners. This may be a futile exercise if parents do not take part in instilling what was taught at school when learners are at home with them.

Boaduo, et al. (2009:98) confirm that several resources were reviewed and the revelation was that teachers and school administrators cannot do it alone. These studies further state that the expertise and specific experiences of parents and other community members are crucial and largely untapped resources who have
assets and expertise that is essential to the partnership. It is important therefore, for the community to be supportive of the efforts of the school to overcome the negative features. Parents are the ones who know their children better than anyone else. The majority of learners who attend in various schools in Zwelitsha come from the surrounding rural areas and squatter camps. Many parents from these areas had poor experiences about going to school. Family and community involvement is very critical to build a more democratic community that will act for others as well as with others in the interest of the common good.

According to Wadsworth (2004:21) a democratic community is based on the acceptance and celebration of differences and it focuses on the integral linkages between the school, the surrounding community and the larger global community. This statement confirms that it is important for all stakeholders to work together and make decisions by consensus in pursuit of a common interest. Therefore, a school is an institution that belongs to the community, and this means that parental involvement in schools can never be avoided. Hence Stern (2003:2) maintains that involving parents is not an option.

This is one of the reasons why the Department of Education tries very hard to develop standards to improve positive partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in schools. Stern (2003) assumes that the partnership of parents and educators will increase levels of social, emotional and academic growth of children. There are students who come to school with ulterior motives. They bring illicit drugs like, heroin, tick, alcohol and tobacco to school and this illustrates the need for a more involved and caring community. Faced with such a set of challenges and circumstances that are overwhelming, parents tend to push themselves away from school.

Some of these children's behaviours are not known by their parents and therefore, if parents consistently keep in touch with the school, they will know those unaccepted behaviours displayed by their children. According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2010:40) parental involvement, especially in the form of parental values and aspirations modelled in the home, is a major force in shaping pupil’s achievement and adjustment. Subsection 10(1) of the South African Schools Act,
1996 clearly states that no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner. Unfortunately this Act does not provide alternatives of exercising discipline for a minor misconduct.

On the other hand, subsection 8(2) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 enforces the establishment of a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process. Desforges and Abouchaar (2010:27) argue that involvement in the school and the parental monitoring of students’ behaviour both have effects on moderating discrepant behaviour. Therefore, parental involvement can contribute to the shaping of a child’s behaviour. They further argue that an appropriate role construct and a sense of personal efficacy will, of course, come to nothing if the opportunity of to be involved is absent.

The realisation of willingness to be involved depends on the invitation, demands and opportunities generated by the school and by the child. According to Catsambis and Garland (1997:1) the role of parents in managing children’s educational experiences at home and at school has long been considered critical for children’s success in school. They further state that school, family, and community partnerships include practices initiated by parents, educators or other community members. These practices may occur at school, at home, or in the community. Epstein (1990) in Catsambis and Garland (1997:1) reflects six types of family involvement and these are:

**Type I:** Refers to basic parenting obligations for the child’s health, safety and preparedness for school and for providing positive home conditions that support educational progress.

**Type II:** Refers to the basic obligations of schools to communicate with families regarding school programmes and student’s progress-such as communication through memos, notices, report cards and conferences with parents.
Type III: Refers to parents’ participation in volunteering at school-such as assisting teachers, administrators, or student in classrooms and in participating in school activities and events-such as student performances, sport, and other events.

Type IV: Refers to parental involvement in student’s learning at home, to parent-child-initiated requests for help and to teacher’s ideas about parents’ involvement in home learning activities.

Type V: Refers to parental involvement in decision-making activities at school (such as participation in Advisory Councils, parent-teacher organisations, parent advocacy groups and other school, district, or state level educational committees).

Type VI: Refers to school and parent collaborations with communities and other community agencies that enhance the learning opportunities of children (such as programmes for after school care or health care, cultural events and community services).

Epstein (1992) in Catsambis and Garland (1997:2) further argue that parental involvement may vary by factors such as students’ age and grade level, social background and experiences of families, and school policies. This perspective therefore shows that it is important to note the change of parental involvement and student life at different levels and what factors influence any observed changes and how these changes affect the progress of the student. They also argue that the significance of the theoretical perspective of overlapping spheres of influence lies not only in the identification of the different types of parental involvement, but also in the recognition that parents’ involvement in children’s education and family school connections is not static, but is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by characteristics of the overlapping spheres of influence and the nature of participants’ interrelationships.
These arguments reflect the importance of expanding knowledge of how family involvement and student life change from the lower grades to high school. Engelbrecht (2003:55) contends that an important aspect of building an inclusive school is the development of good school-community relations. This includes the development of positive and creative partnerships with parents, as well as other community resources, such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’s), Disability People’s Organisations (DPO’s), neighbouring education institutions—including those providing special programmes)—relative departments, local government and relevant specialists in the community.

Section 2.2.6 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 states that there should be partnership between all stakeholders who have an interest in education. These are the State, parents, learners, educators, other members of the community in the vicinity of the school, special education bodies and the private sector. This Act further requires that all the stakeholders in education must accept their responsibilities concerning the organisation, governance and funding of the school. Van der Westhuizen, et al. (2003:24) identify the following principles of the relationship between a school and the parents:

- Practical co-operation brings important benefits to all involved—Educator, parent and learners;
- Good relations between home and school are a major feature of educational institutions that are effective, accountable and responsive to the needs of all involved;
- Effective family-school relations recognize the importance of parents’ own learning and development;
- Strong home-school links are a vital ingredient in communities.

The points highlighted above clearly show that there might not be any consensus on specific needs, but there is an agreement that parents and families are important and there is a need to promote human interrelations between schools and communities. Educators should not be left alone to run their institutions as
they see fit. They should be required to respond to the demands of their communities. Section 2.2.4.1 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 envisages a type of education that is designed in such a manner that parents should be involved in the development of the talents of learners.

This can only be achieved through the principle of a partnership between the school and the community it serves. Educators and other professionals need to develop productive relationships with parents and focus on parents’ strengths and not their weaknesses. Some parents in the previously disadvantaged feel vulnerable. Therefore educators should develop skills for communicating sensitively and effectively with such parents to allay this feeling. Educators should create an environment where parents can feel like partners in their children’s schools and not like intruders. Positive teacher attitudes to working with parents are an essential factor for a successful parental involvement in school governance.

According to Sallis (2000:19) many parents will always be fearful of schools, however open they are, and will see closed doors where there are none. They will be afraid that their concerns are “too trivial” or that they have the wrong end of the stick and will look foolish. Educators must be able to listen carefully with their ears, mind and heart to the views of parents so that they can identify other needy areas in development. Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2002:90) further confirm that, unfortunately, there is an attitude within some schools that reflects a lack of valuing of parental participation or parental opinions in the schools. This attitude ranges from disinterest in encouraging parental involvement to outright hostility towards parents. This attitude will obviously make parents feel unwelcome on the school premises.

Parents may become more hostile and unwilling to give their support to educators, should they be kept out of school by negative educator attitudes. Gonzalez-DeHaas 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 or will bring parental criticism of their instructional methods, curriculum decisions, and classroom management techniques. Sallis (2000:24)
maintains that governors are intended to be initiators, collaborators or, at the very least actively consenting partners in all important school decisions. During the 1976 uprising, which was as a result of the policy of apartheid and Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, the culture of teaching and learning in previously disadvantaged areas was destroyed.

Hence, the former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, at the opening of parliament remarked “The culture of confrontation needs to be replaced by the culture of learning”. In the declaration made by the Transvaal United African Teachers Association (TUATA) in 1992, it was made clear that, for the culture of teaching and learning to take place, parents should be involved and actively support the school and its teachers.

Therefore, while the South African Government is trying to promote democratic processes and community ownership, it is also faced with additional challenges of having to integrate the historically decentralised system, improving the efficiency of the system, and redressing apartheid imbalances. The TUATA declaration of 1992 further recommends that parents should take up their responsibility as educators of their children. Vaughan, Xaba and Associates (2004:1) explain that community participation does not only mean that there is an inherent value in ensuring that people are able to influence activities that will affect them, but also that participation helps to build skill and ability and contributes to empowerment.

De Beer and Swanepoel (1997:20) describe participation as normally associated with the actions of the communities, groups or individuals in relation to the development or positive change of an existing less acceptable situation. Therefore, parents are supposed to be allowed to articulate their will and their needs directly to their children’s schools. There is a growing recognition internationally that all aspects of school improvement-challenging curricula, instruction for active learning, rigorous assessments, and effective school management and classroom organisation-are more likely to succeed if families and communities are effectively involved (Mestry and Grobler 2007:178).
2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

According to the Africa Education Watch Report (2010:1) one of the reasons for promoting the decentralisation is the hope that, by bringing the resources and decision-making processes closer to parents and communities, it will strengthen governance, and the resources available for the primary education will be better used. The decentralisation of the decision-making authority from education administrators at the National and Provincial spheres of government, as well as from the District to educators and parents, changes the locus of decision-making and execution of responsibilities to all stakeholders.

Parents play a very important role in school governance. Without their involvement a school may find itself having irrelevant and unpopular rules and decisions. To avoid a situation of this nature parents should be involved as decision-makers, as well as co-educators. The role of parents in school governance is discussed in the following paragraphs. Swap in Menstry and Crosier (2007:178) describes four basic models of parental involvement in school governance.

- **The protective model:**
  The aim of this model is to reduce conflict between parents and teachers, primarily through separating their functions, which is, “protecting” the school from parent interference. The protective model assumes that parents delegate the education of their children, and that the school is then accountable. There is little parent intrusion but structures exist for collaboration and communication.

- **School-to-home transmission:**
  In this model the school enlists parents to support the objectives and the activities of the school. This model assumes that parents should endorse the importance of school expectations through collaboration and communication.
➢ Curriculum enrichment:
The goal of this model is to expand and extend the school curriculum by incorporating the contributions of parents. Parents and teachers are assumed to be working collaboratively, to enrich the objectives and content.

➢ Parent-teacher partnership
In this model parents and teachers should work together to accomplish success for all children. This model assumes that a common mission requires collaboration between parents and teachers. This is a true partnership based on collegiality and mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parents and the school.

2.4.1 Parents as decision-makers
Decision making is an activity that can be undertaken by an individual or by a group and it is a process that encompasses various stages. Smit, Cronje, Brevis and Vreba (2007:149) identify three conditions of decision-making and level of uncertainty when a decision is made. First, when a decision maker has complete certainty it when the available options and the benefits or costs of each decision are known. At this level, no element of change intervenes between the options and is outcome and decision is a sure thing. Secondly, when a decision-maker makes a complex decision under complicated and complex conditions there is an element of risk. The decision-maker has some certainty where the outcome of each alternative is not known in advance. Therefore, probability can be assigned to each alternative outcome and the decision is a ‘gamble’. Thirdly, when a decision maker has complete uncertainty, the outcome of each alternative is unpredictable. The probability cannot be assigned to each alternative outcome and the decision will require ‘guts’. Therefore it is very important that parents must be involved when decisions are taken by the school management. For example, the contribution and the views of parents will have to be considered when a school is taking a decision that will affect the community.
In an extreme case, if a school decides that there will be a party every Friday afternoon to entertain learners and each learner will contribute an amount of money. This decision would have financial implications and parent will be thus implicated because learners do not have any source of income but will get this money from their parents.

According to Sadker and Sadker (1991:321) the school Principal is usually the individual mostly responsible for the school personnel decision, including hiring and firing. The school Principal should not overlook parents, who can make their displeasure felt and influence the personnel significantly in this regard. Parents in the previously disadvantaged areas do not seem to be participating in the activities of the school and school governance as they are expected to. Yet they are mandated by the South African schools Act, 1996 to deliberate on any policy issue affecting the school. According to Gultig, Ndlovu and Bertram (2002: 5) a true culture of teaching, as well as a supportive management culture, can only thrive in a school where the major stakeholders feel ownership of the school’s mission and ethos.

According to Van der Westhuizen (2003:25) decisions are made easier by the existence of rule books, but, at other times the complexity of the situation calls for courage and wisdom based on as many objective criteria as possible. Therefore, decisions rest on the awareness of several alternatives and their consequences. Hence, in institutions and organisations, decisions are made on the basis of consultation, collaboration, partnership, mutual trust and the participation of all affected parties, and a school is no exception to this. Parents and other community members were not given an opportunity to participate in decision-making and the planning of their children’s education. This is supported by Smit, et al. (2007:153) who suggest that group decision-making often make better decisions than those made by the average group member, their decisions consistently fall short of the quality of decisions made by the best individual member. However the advantages of group decision making are as follows:

- A variety of skills and specialised knowledge can be used to define and sole a problem or recognise an opportunity.
Multiple and conflicting views can be taken into account.

Beliefs and values can be transmitted and aligned.

More members will be committed to decisions, since they will have participated in the decision-making process.

Participation in problem solving and decision making will improve the morale and motivation of employees.

Allowing participation in problem solving and decision making trains people to work in groups through developing group process skills.

According to Sallis (2000:24) governors are intended to be initiators, collaborators, or, at the very least, actively consenting partners in all important school decisions—on the schools’ development plan, curriculum policy, finance, organisation, staff structure and staff-selection. Mayes (1997:371) states that those with a stake in organisations should have an opportunity to influence—though not to determine—decisions affecting that organisation in proportion to their stake in it. Parents therefore, as stakeholders should influence the decisions about the school.

2.4.2 Parents as co-educators

The influence of educators on children is very limited because children spend most of their time out of school and mostly under the influence of their parents. School-going children spend six hours at school and the next eighteen hours are spent at home or with parents. Educators are aware that most education takes place outside school and therefore, parents inescapably educate their children. They are, in this sense, non-professional educators which cannot be neglected by professional educators. There is a correlation between home background and children’s achievements. A common scenario is one where both parents are alcoholics and there is no one responsible for the progress and the development of a child.
Dr Ramphele in Meintjies (1992) marked that an increase in crime, lawlessness and a lack of responsibility were signals that the fabric of township life had come apart. The chaos in schools was part of this. Some students from these townships have such experiences and Zwelitsha is no exception. More often than not, they have a disintegrated family life and single parents who directly affect their morale. Nevertheless, parents still have an obligation to guide their children to proper adulthood. Mayes (1997:365) states that since it is the parents who have given life to their children, it is they who have the serious obligation of educating their offspring. In all fairness therefore, the care and education of children are the natural right of parents and the duty is primarily theirs.

It is also important for schools to create an open environment for parents to participate in school governance without discriminating against them. The parental dimension of schooling is central to the professional performance of educators, yet it is still underrated by the same parents in the Zwelitsha area.

2.4.3 Parents’ empowerment

People’s participation implies empowerment and participation means that people must have the power to influence the decisions that affect their lives. Without empowerment participation becomes ineffective. All different aspects of empowerment (political, economic and institutional) must be present for participation to be meaningful (De Beer and Swanepoel 2004:135). One of the key elements of the School Governing Body is to empower parents in school communities and facilitate their involvement in school governance. There should be capacity building programmes that are monitored so that they can contribute to the empowering of parents.

Local municipalities are able to assess local needs and particular priorities for their own local school. Therefore, they should initiate local projects and develop training programmes to empower parents. These local municipalities should also encourage and support local developments that are responsive to the needs of both parents and schools. Parents should be empowered and equipped with
necessary skills so that they can be able to facilitate learning at home. This will also help them to be able to make informed decisions about their children’s education and future. According to Seligman (2000:4) in their sincere desire to motivate parents to help their child, teachers may take impossible demands that can cause discouragement and despair. Insensitivity to the resources of the parents and family is counterproductive. The above statement proves that some parents inhibit the growth of their relationship with educators by misjudging them to be insensitive, offensive and incapable of understanding their situation.

The current curriculum requires schools to teach Art and Culture as a learning area, and there are parents who can be asked to assist educators about certain cultural processes. Some parents are poets who wrote poems that are taught at schools. These parents could be invited to make poetry analysis in schools. The introduction of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa created a lot of opportunities for greater parental involvement in public education at all levels. The Outcomes Based approach requires parents to share in the responsibility of their children’s education, ensuring the active promotion of the culture of learning and a goal of making educational outcomes of the highest standards (Department of Education, 1997).

Other community members can assist with agricultural science as one of the learning areas that are practical and are better understood by both literate and illiterate parents. Involving parents in school programmes builds their confidence that professionals have trust in them. This will also develop the skills of those parents and their level of understanding of school as an institution that belongs to the community. This also will improve the service that the school can offer to the community. Wiebi in Mestry and Grobler (2007:177) explain that parental participation in school can enhance student learning and behaviour, spread workloads, offer more experiences to the students and spread the good news and encouragement to the community of the job being done by their teachers and students. On the other hand Mestry and Grobler (2007:177) explain 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.
Finally, initiatives to empower parents have been suggested and these include local projects that must be run by local municipalities in order to develop parents’ understanding of school governance.

2.5 MECHANISMS OF PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Each school ought to set up mechanisms of promoting parental involvement in school governance. Mechanisms that are often used by schools are school governing bodies (SGBs), parent-teacher meetings, different communication approaches with parents and different collaborations with parents. It is therefore necessary to look at the importance and the functions of the School Governing Body and to look at the procedures of the parents’ meetings, communication and collaboration.

2.5.1 School Governing Body (SGB)

Section 16(1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) stipulates that the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body and it may perform only such functions and obligations and exercise only such rights as prescribed by the Act. According to this Act, a governing body is a statutory body of people who are elected to govern a school. According to Beckman and Prinsloo (2009:171) the establishment of school governing bodies represent a significant decentralisation of power in the South African schools system. They further state that the SASA (South African Schools Act) was aimed to give effect to the principle of the democratisation of schooling by affording meaningful power over their schools to the school-level stakeholders including the governors serving on school governing bodies. The above statement shows that South African Government supports the decentralisation of school governance to the level of all interest groups.
In keeping with international trends, Moller and Ngidi in Mestry and Grobler (2007:176) highlight the fact that South African schools have also moved toward decentralisation and more powers concerning education and school governance have been devolved to schools. The school governors who are the people serving in the Governing Body, represent the school community. Section 15 (1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) states that every public school is a juristic person, with the legal capacity to perform its functions in terms of this Act.

Now that a school is a juristic person, it may buy, sell, hire or own property and enter into contracts, but all these should be done in terms of the Schools Act and through its Governing Body. Subject to Section 23(2) of the Schools Act, elected members of the Governing Body comprises the parents of learners at the school, educators at the school, members of staff, who are not educators, and learners in the eighth Grade or higher at the school. The number of parent members must comprise one more than the combined total of the other members of the governing body who have voting powers. In terms of Section 36 (1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), a governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school.

The SGB must elect a chairperson from amongst its members who is not a parent member of another governing body and who is not an employee of that public school, a treasurer and a secretary as office-bearers. The number of parents in the School Governing Body increases the community’s sense of ownership of the school. This is in line with the statement made by the former Minister of Education in South Africa, Kader Asmal (1999) contended that an SGB led by parents exercises a trust on behalf of the parents of the community, and functions as an indispensable link between the school and the community. Consequently, the School Governing Body needs the support, co-operation and trust of all affected stakeholders in the education system so that they can perform their functions to their level best. The strength that is given to the SGB gives it the real power to have a link with the community. One of the tasks of the School Governing Body is
to encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff to render work willingly for the school. A governing body is therefore placed in a position of trust towards a school, it is expected to act in good faith, to carry out all its duties and functions on behalf of a school and be accountable for its actions.

The inclusion of parents in School Governing Bodies is a positive effort to achieve the aim of co-operation and parental involvement in school governance. Mestry and Grobler (2007:178) state that the core functions of the SGB is to promote the educational interests of the school and consequently of the learners. The African National Congress held a National Education Conference at Broedestroom in March 1992 where a code of conduct, which was directed to the responsibilities of educators, learners and parents was formulated. Some of the responsibilities given to parents were that they should become involved in their children’s education and support the school in achieving its aims.

Parental involvement in school governance is underpinned by the assumption that all parents share common interests in the education of their children. Therefore, they have to be represented on School Governing Body and they must have a bigger stake in the School Governing Body. One of the tasks of the SGB is to encourage parents, learners and staff to render voluntary services to the school.

2.5.2 Parents’ meetings
Section 18(2)(a) of the South African Schools Act requires that meetings of the Governing Body with parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school, should be held once a year. The SGB should hold its meetings at least once every school term. Parents should feel welcome and respected at the meeting. The agenda must be well-written and be put before the meeting so that parents can see it earlier and prepare their contributions. The meeting must also be held on a convenient day and time because some parents work during the week. Some parents live far from their children’s schools so meetings should cater for these parents because most of them do not have their own transport.
Learners are given letters that invite their parents to a parents’ meeting well in advance. These meetings are also announced at public gatherings like churches and local radio stations. In most schools in Zwelitsha, these meetings are convened for Sunday afternoons.

2.5.3 Communicating with parents

Communication is the basis of all relationships. Although most people take communication for granted, its importance cannot be overestimated. Communication affects every decision and almost every activity in the organisation (Ferreira, Erasmus and Groenewald 2003:93). It is critically important for communication to take place in schools, that is, the educators and school management must communicate with the parents. This would create a space for sharing of information and ideas so as to make informed decisions and rules.

During the communication process, the parents will understand how the school operates and what they are expected to do in terms of improving its condition. Mabovula (2010:1) state that through the notion of communicative action school governing body 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.

Communicative action according to Harbemas in Mabovula (2010:1) is a circular process in which the actor is two things in one; an initiator who masters situations for which he is accountable and a product of the transitions surrounding him, of groups whose cohesion is based on solidarity to which he belongs, and of processes of socialisation in which he is reared. This explanation means that communicative action uses all human ways of thinking and language which will be helpful to all school governance stakeholders understand and agree with one another.

This notion is in line with the South African School Governance Framework (RSA, 2004) which calls not only for dialogue, but for space for safe and free expression. 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). Mabovula (2010:1) further states that social justice and equity are highlighted in governance framework, the South African Constitution grants inalienable rights to equality, freedom of expression and choice, which are in line with the inclusion of values in education. In addition to the framework, the South African schools Act stipulates that [a] school governance structure should involve all stakeholder groups inactive and responsible roles, encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision-making. However, while the rewards have been great, there are still many challenges which need to be faced in the area of school governance such as a lack of communication, rational thinking, inclusive democratic participation, freedom of speech, equality and individual rights. The research using the National Education Longitudinal study of 1988 (NELS: 88) reveals that parents report a serious lack of communication from schools, and the families themselves contact schools infrequently. A big proportion of middle grade students and their families are isolated from or unconnected with their schools and are uniformed about students’ progress and their school’s programs.

Habermas (1996) in Mabovula (2010:2) asserts that the rationality must be dialogical or ‘communicative’; through which participants advance arguments and counterarguments. This rationality therefore will bring consensual decisions so that at the end all governance stakeholders are convinced by the decisions of the deliberative process and accept them as reasonable. Communication between schools and parents is important so that there could be mutual understanding of key issues and needs of the school.

On the other hand, educators and school management will know and understand the expectations of parents, their views and values. This state of affairs would create a conducive environment for teaching and learning as there will be no tensions between parents and the educators as well as the school management. Habermas further describes the ‘public sphere’ as a discursive space in which citizens participate and act through dialogue and debate. Roederer and Moelendorf also maintain that for democratic participation to be a success, rationality is vital in order to set up a procedural model of politics ( or a theory of
discourse, ethics or communicative action) (Mabovula 2010). Mestry and Grozier (2007:177) found that many parents encounter obstacles to involvement in school governance due to negative communication from schools.

It is the duty of educators to always communicate with parents and promote a harmonious atmosphere with them. Parents need to be kept informed about the progress of their children as stipulated in the Code of Conduct, the South African Council of Educators (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Schools must also inform parents about school curriculum so that they can share their views about the curriculum. Provision should be made by schools for parents to be able to hold formal and informal dialogue with educators. Therefore, according to Mestry and Grobler (2007:178) there must be open communication between schools and parents to counteract miscommunication, and communication is an essential condition for effective collaboration.

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, is making them aware of policies, procedures, aims and expectations of the school. There is a need for the development of educator’s communication skills for the free flow of information between schools and parents. Educators need to be sensitive when dealing with parents so that parents can feel welcome in their children’s schools.

According to Herbamas in Mabovula (2010) the rights of people to participate in deliberation are legally institutionalised without any individual being excluded. Success of communicative action depends not only on a collectively active citizenry, but on the institutionalisation of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication that would allow citizens to deliberate in informal public spheres. Herbamas also believes that every individual has ‘an equal opportunity to be heard’ in the deliberation process. Elster in Mabovula (2010:3) believes that deliberation refers either to a particular sort of discussion- one that involves the careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against some
proposition- or to an inferior process by which an individual weighs reasons for and against courses of action.

2.5.4 Collaborating with parents

Collaboration takes place in an organisational community consisting of local interest groups that relate to one another on a network basis rather than a hierarchical one. This means a horizontal instead of vertical communication. All participating organisations have the same goals and objectives which they strive to obtain through an interrelated and integrated programme (De Beer and Swanepoel 2004:76). Hence the interrelationship between parents and the school is an important idea in the educational system. Therefore, active collaboration should be promoted among all the affected stakeholders, namely, school principals, educators, parents and learners.

According to Menstry and Crozier (2007:178) collaboration implies joint decision-making amongst all the relevant stakeholders. They further state that appropriate decisions can be taken only if everyone has sufficient information at their disposal. Therefore for true collaboration to exist, schools must make sure that the relevant information is properly communicated. Calabrese (1990) and Crozier (2000) in Mestry and Grobler (2007:177) argue that parents are not the sole reason for their lack of involvement. Menstry and Grobler (2007:180) state that for effective parental involvement in schools, there should be collaborative efforts by parents, teachers and governors of the school.

Perceiving parents as members of the collaborative partnership with the school implies that they are of equal importance to other role players and are expected to contribute their expertise in a collegial manner towards a shared goal. Therefore, there should be a paradigm shift on the side of educators from that of playing a role of expert to that of collaborative agent.

Parents have to offer their skills to the school and assist educators to guide learners. They offer these skills again to assist the school to function as a caring and high quality education community. The schools should also come up with
comprehensive programmes for parents to volunteer at school. Epstein and Lee, in Catsambis and Garland (1997:3) state that if middle schools were to create programmes that encourage school-family contacts and guide parents’ interactions, more families would participate in schools and would be able to guide their children in their learning efforts.

2.6 CONCLUSION

It can be deduced that parental involvement in school governance is as necessity as required by the South African Schools Act, 1996. Parents as stakeholders have to play a participatory role in school governance. Subsequently they will be part of decision-making on issues that affect them. The next chapter will deal with proposed strategies to encourage parental participation.
CHAPTER 3
PROPOSED STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION
In this chapter, the strategies to ensure that the participation of parents in school governance in high schools in the Zwelitsha District are proposed. The aim is to minimize the challenges experienced by the previously advantaged schools in school governance. Also, these strategies ensure compliance with section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 which directly addresses school governance. This Act strongly emphasises the need for parents to be full participants in school governance.

The chapter will look at the causes of non-parental involvement in school governance before dealing with the strategies of promoting parental involvement in school governance.

3.2 CAUSES OF NON-PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE
Low levels of parental involvement in previously disadvantaged high schools are caused by different factors. These factors are discussed below:

3.2.1 The demise of the apartheid system of education
For so many years a struggle for the democratic control of schools has been a major objective of the political struggle in South Africa. In some societies such as Zwelitsha, there is no history or societal expectation of parental involvement in schools and in their children’s education. There are historical reasons behind the non-involvement of parents in school governance in previously disadvantaged areas in South Africa. Before 1994, parents from these areas were generally disempowered and marginalised in the education of their children by the apartheid system. The way in which parents have been approached by school and education support personnel, stifled parental involvement in school governance.
Although the importance of family is widely recognised in education, its implementation in actual practice is weaker. Shorez in Gonzalez-Dehaas (2007:87). On the other hand, social and economical marginalisation had a negative impact on parental involvement in school governance in the previously disadvantaged areas. Gonzalez-DeHass (2003:85) states that despite such support, involvement practices reach a narrow audience of parent populations and are generally restricted to a few types of parent participation. More systematic and meaningful parent participation is hindered by many obstacles; parents who lack the desire and confidence to become involved, educators who lack the desire to encourage parent involvement, teachers’ preconceptions surrounding parental culpability, home-school scheduling conflicts, conflicting beliefs about the ways parents should be involved, vagueness surrounding the changing role of parent involvement during student's adolescent years, and the lack of teacher preparation and administrative support.

The above statement proves that parental involvement in school governance is still underutilised. According to Crozier and Reay (2005:27) the differential impact of social class, positioning and ethnicity means that parents are dealing with different layers of continuity and discontinuity between their own and their children’s educational experiences. This statement clearly shows that, both the quality and the quantity of parental involvement in their children’s education are affected by their personal histories. Almost all the high schools in this area are seen as islands and no go entry zones for parents.

Grozier and Reay (2005:26) further state that where children’s class and cultural background bears little resemblance to that of their teachers, connection between home and school is minimal and tenuous. Principle number three of the Batho Pele Principles requires that there should be equal access to the services to which people are entitled, especially the previously disadvantaged communities. Parents are entitled to their children’s school services and therefore, they must have access to school records as this is required by this principle.

This statement confirms the notion of Graves, Gargiulo and Holmes (1996:143) in Boaduo, et al. (2009:101) that parental involvement is a process of actualising the
potential of parents, of helping parents discover their strengths, potentials and using them for their own benefits, their families and schools.

### 3.2.2 Demographic changes

In most cases people who develop their resources and lay claim to their right to control them are people within that particular geographic area. The challenge with most high schools in Zwelitsha is that most school-aged children have mothers who are in the work force. These social movements, especially women, play a crucial role in changing family lives and this affects the way of thinking about active participation in their children’s schools. There are children who come from villages to study in the location where they get freedom of staying alone, and because of the distance between their homes and schools, their parents do not involve themselves in school activities. Some of these children walk long distances from their homes to school, sometimes more than five kilometres and their parents cannot afford their transport fair. Hence the Department of Education provides scholar transport for these learners.

### 3.2.3 Economy and education

It appears that, family socio-economic status is one of the powerful predictors of parental involvement in school governance. According to Steyn and Wolhuter (2002:131) socio-economic status is the composition and social development of the target group. Financial resources, confidence in relation to the educational system, educational knowledge and information about schooling, all had a bearing on the extent to which mothers felt empowered to intervene in their child’s educational trajectory and the confidence with which they embark on such action (Grozier 2005:31). The financial constraints of these parents are further illustrated by not paying for school fees and school uniforms. Ballen and Moles in Menstry and Grobler (2007:177) assert that parents, who are among the poorest sections of the society are locked in the difficult struggle to survive. They live in inadequate housing, are badly paid, work unsocial hours and/or unemployed.

With the increase in their one parent or both parents working more than one job, children are often left alone. In these situations the parents are often pressured for
time and are unable to assist their children in their school work. Parents who earn a low income face many obstacles when they attempt to become involved in their children’s education. According to a study conducted by Baker, et al. (1999), these parents have fewer opportunities to meet and share information with the teachers. They do not attend events at school due to the lack of transportation, money, or to make their presence known to the school staff. The affected children are characterized by a restricted language ability, very restricted frame of reference, intellectual and emotional handicaps and also malnutrition.

This statement is clearly demonstrated by the model of the relationship between family social class, and pupil achievement and adjustment (Desfoges and Abouchaar 2003:16). The model is presented below:

*Diagram 2.3 Relationship between family social class, and pupil achievement and adjustment*

![Diagram 2.3 Relationship between family social class, and pupil achievement and adjustment](image)

Source: Sadker, et al. (2002)

Desfoges and Abouchaar (2003:16) state that the present interest in this model is the presumed role of parental involvement. Involvement is assumed to be a working link between social class and pupil achievement and adjustment. In this
process, involvement is assumed to be influenced by material deprivation and parental aspiration. They further stipulate that the poorer the people’ circumstances are, the more difficult it is assumed to be to support a child’s educational development. The arrows in the diagram indicate presumed directions of influence, showing the anticipated direction of causes to effects. It is then assumed in this diagram that social class has its influence through parental involvement, material deprivation, parental aspirations and school composition.

In the research conducted by Boaduo, *at al.* (2009:101) when parents were asked about the degree of their involvement in the schools. Seventy % of the parents, especially those who do not have gainful employment, were sceptical about getting involved in the activities of the school. They complain that they are illiterate, and those who are not completely illiterate, think they have low educational and socio-economic status and for that reason they cannot make any contribution when required. They argue that they struggle throughout the day to be able to put food on the table at the end of the day for their children.

### 3.2.4 The organisation of the school system

Levels of parental involvement can be increased in areas where all children walk to their local schools unlike Zwelitsha, where most high school learners are transported to schools from areas outside Zwelitsha. If parents can be around their children’s schools, they will have a sense of ownership and see those schools as part of their communities.

### 3.2.5 The relationship between teachers and parents.

For a successful parental involvement in school governance, positive teacher attitudes to working with parents are essential. These factors towards parents vary, but they tend to lean heavily on the negative, and this perpetuates a negative attitude of some parents towards educators. Some educators consider dealing with parents as being stressful and, as such, a deterrent to job satisfaction. According to Gonzales-DeHaas and Willems (2003:90) there is an attitude within some schools that reflects a lack of valueing of parental participation or parental opinions in the schools. This attitude varies from
disinterest in encouraging parental involvement to outright hostility towards parents. They further state that in addition to the lack of consensus among educators on the value of parent involvement some teacher’s preconceived notions about many parents’ incompetencies and skills in respect to child rearing practices further hinders effort to build parent involvement. Some educators feel that involving parents in the classroom or asking them to assist their children with homework and assignments would not be of help since most parents were not trained.

Due to the pre-determined attitude that some teachers embrace, parents may perceive that they have been judged before even coming into contact with the teacher. There are educators who feel that some parents are too busy to be expected to contribute considerable time to schools. Parents have to visit the school regularly so that they can discuss their children’s performances and their children’s behaviour with educators. This can only be done with the help of educators by creating a welcoming environment towards parents. In some cases a negative relationship between parents and teachers is caused by negative attitudes towards students, and that directly affects these parents.

Sometimes the parent is blamed for the child’s bad behaviour, and so the child is returned to the parent to deal with it. This creates bad relationships between that particular parent and the educator concerned. In most cases in the previously disadvantaged schools, when parents are invited to a parents’ meeting, they do not turn up, but when a child is punished by a teacher the parent will come to school uninvited. They claim that they are protecting their children. Lortie in Seligman (2000:29) uncovers the vulnerable position in which the teacher is always found.

Parents have different expectations from educators which places the educator in conflict, which is compounded when several parents have contradictory expectations. On the other hand educators depend solely on parents for them to influence their children in ways educators and school managers value. Parents have to infuse a positive attitude in their children towards school work because educators have only limited authority over those learners. There are educators
who are threatened by well-known or highly educated parents and this makes teacher attitudes not as healthy as they should be.

3.2.6 Lack of support
The school has a responsibility of encouraging healthy relationships between all stakeholders - internal and external. The School Management Team and educators have to make parents feel that their contribution towards school matters is beneficial to them personally and to the larger school community. This makes parents feel that there is a connection between their needs and those of the school. Parents are rich resources of experience and skills, which can be helpful in building a broader sense of ownership of schools, if they are allowed to contribute to achieving the common goal of the school.

It is important for educators to always listen carefully to members of the community and try to understand their fears. Educational training is a unitary action, but on the other hand it is influenced by differentiated inputs of stakeholders. Educators have to focus more on the parents’ strengths more than their weaknesses in order to develop productive relationships. They should go out into their communities with empathy and interact meaningfully with their constituents.

3.3 PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE
South Africa is now at the point where parental involvement in school governance is no longer an option. According to Grozier and Reay (2005:25) what has become increasingly apparent is that in the 2000s parental involvement has been conscripted by Government’s standards agenda and has become a key means by which schooling can tap into the cultural capital resources of parents in the policy drive to raise educational standards. Although some parents from the previously disadvantaged communities are trying to seek out the best in their children’s education, they are still faced with the need to make up for the deficiencies of the previous system.
In the mid-1980's a strategy for addressing a volatile crisis in education emerged, and this was characterized by the slogan “People's Education for People's Power”. The National Consultative Conference on the Education Crisis was convened by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee in December 1985. This committee worked as an organisational vehicle to address the crisis in Black schools. In March 1995 Professor Sibusiso Bengu who was the Minister of Education at the time, appointed the Hunter Commission to research on the organization, funding and financing of South African schools.

The Hunter Review Committee’s report of August 1995 was followed by two White Papers which were essentially the Government’s response to the Hunter Commission. This commission and the two White Papers led to the formulation of the South African Schools Act Bill which directly addresses school governance and the importance of parental involvement in school governance.

3.3.1 Capacitating of parents

The above statement is further supported by Van Niekerk and Mamwende (2000:2) who state that one of the significant directives of the South African scene is the decentralisation of power, whereby the statutory powers vested in local schools and their governing bodies are continually being amplified. Decentralisation of power to various stakeholders, of whom the parents of learners form a very significant part, is one of the national directives for contemporary South African education. Therefore, parents should have access to the governance of the education of their children. Nyire (2000:1) states that decentralisation is identified by many as a crucial factor contributing to good governance.

Therefore, if parents are not adequately represented among the school governors, they cannot exercise an appropriate level of participation in the life of a school. There are parents who have an interest in working with schools, but lack the necessary knowledge and skills to perform the duties of governors. They therefore need practical advice and a detailed explanation on how to be actively involved in school governance and how they can play an active role in the
education of their children (Mestry and Grobler 2007:183). The school, together with the education department should take the initiative to plan induction programmes for new members of the School Governing Body.

There should be monitored capacity building programmes so that they can contribute to the empowering of parents. The Department of Education needs to intervene by facilitating the development of parent empowerment programmes. Mestry and Grobler (2007) further suggest that workshops should be arranged for parents. The essence of the workshop is that it should include a practical and experimental component in which teachers and parents share their knowledge and skills not only in planning but also in carrying out a programme of teaching. These workshops can create opportunities for parents to air a wide range of issues and concerns, to make social contacts and listen to invited speakers. Teachers and parents would be taking part in joint activities designed to develop competency and behaviour.

Scharlick, in Nyire (2000:1), explains that the relationship between governance and decentralisation is a way for the state to prove multiple centres of participation in decision–making. This in turn should ensure better management, responsiveness and accountability, which are the basic features of good governance. Jery Van Sant in Nyire (2000:1) also identifies decentralisation as an important institutional setting to improve governance in developing nations. There seems to be an agreement on the crucial role that decentralisation plays in democratic societies.

3.2.2 The establishment of a teacher-parent collegiality

The development of the partnership between community members and professionals should be constructive and non-discriminatory with the intention of redressing the imbalances of the past.

The above statement is in line with section 39 (1) of the Constitution of Republic of South Africa,1996 (chapter 2) the Bill of Rights which underlines the importance of promoting the values that underlie an open and democratic society based on
human dignity, equality and freedom. These values therefore influence and bind the operations of education as it is one of the spheres of South African society.

3.2.3 Recognition of a cultural capital
Cultural discrepancies that exist between the home life of minority and less-educated parents, and their children’s school life, may create tensions and intimidation between the parents and the teacher, discouraging such parents from taking part in their children’s school environment. Cultural capital is implicated in the ability of mothers to draw on a range of strategies in supporting their children’s schooling (Grosier and Reay 2005:31). This means that cultural capital plays an important and crucial role in the extent to which parents provide for their children.

3.2.4 The establishment of parent organisations
Schools need to promote parent organisations so that parents can learn from one another. Another responsibility of the school is to provide the basis of having informed and thinking citizens, because a democratic society flourishes when its citizens are informed. There are existing resources in the communities that can be used in the provision of support, but they are not recognised by professionals.

3.2.5 The utilisation of non-governmental organisations (NGO)
There are Non Governmental Organisations that have played a crucial role in supporting learning centres in South Africa. These NGOs should be used to assist in the development of parents in some educational aspects and to develop public awareness campaigns. According to Gildenhuys (2004:48) the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) persuade individuals with official or influential roles in decision-making of the point of view of an NGO. They also help with drafting of official papers and resolutions.

3.2.6 The establishment of centres of learning
The centres of learning should create a supportive environment so that parents would feel worthy and have a sense of belonging in the school community.
3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the causes of non-parental involvement in school governance. From the above discussion, it can be deduced that, as prescribed by the South African Schools Act, 1996 and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, there is a need for the inclusion of parents in school governance. It has been noted that to promote levels of parental involvement in previously disadvantaged schools, local and national programmes should be developed.

This chapter argues that parent-teacher relationships should be created in such a way that parents feel that there is a connection between their needs and those of the school. Parents should also be treated with all the dignity they deserve. Chapter 4 will deal with the research methodology, data collection and interpretation.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION
Non-parental involvement in school governance, especially in the previously disadvantaged high schools, is a national cry, but for the purpose of the study, this research was limited to high schools in Zwelitsha, the King William’s Town District in the Eastern Cape Province.

In Chapters 2 and 3 the importance, the causes and the strategies to encourage participation of parents in school governance are attended to. This chapter will focus on the research methodology and the tools that will be used for the collection and analysis of data.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The validity of this research will depend on the choice of methods that will be used to collect data. In social sciences the two research methodologies that are usually used are qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

According to Bryman (1995:3), qualitative research was proposed since its practitioners would be able to get closer to the people they were investigating and be less inclined to impose inappropriate conceptual frameworks on them. This approach is used to collect information in the form of words which will give an in-depth understanding of the nature of what these parents experience. Merriam (2002:21), on the other hand refers to the qualitative research as a mix of rich, thick description and interpretation.

According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:29) a qualitative methodology refers to the research which produces descriptive data generally people’s own written or spoken words. Brynard and Hanekom (1997:29) argue that the quantitative research is associated with analytical research, and its purpose is to arrive at a universal statement. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:37,) on the other hand say the quantitative approach relies on measurement to compare and analyse different variables. Quantitative approach does not envision any physical contact between
the researcher and the subject, and it as an impersonally experimental type of research.

In this approach the data are expected to be precise, reliable and unequivocal. To achieve the aim of this study, qualitative approach was used. This included the distribution of questionnaires to the parents, educators and principals of the selected high schools in Zwelitsha to get views on the participation of parents in the school governance. Mason (1997:3) describes qualitative approach as perhaps most commonly associated with certain schools which fall broadly within what is known as the interpretivist sociological tradition, particularly phenomenology, ethnology and symbolic interactionism. This approach is inherently multi method in focus, therefore, in this study it was used to secure and add rigor, breath, complexity and richness to this enquiry.

Qualitative approach is concerned with process, meanings, and the nature of participation as a phenomenon. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133) 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. The explanation given above confirms that the researcher will be able to attain rich, real, deep and valid data from a rational standpoint. To achieve the aim of this study the qualitative approach was used. This included distributing questionnaires to the parents of learners, educators and principals of the selected schools in Zwelitsha to get views on the participation of parents in the school governance.

4.3 POPULATION

According to Welman and Kruger (2001:253) this is where the participants are actually going to be attained from. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:205) define population as generally a homogenous group of individual units. Three high schools from the Zwelitsha District were used in this research and the measure of freedom for both the researcher and the interviewee will help in steering the conversation. These schools are Thembalabantu High School, Xolani Senior Secondary School and Nompendulo Senior Secondary School. The parents of learners who study in these schools also formed part of the population.
4.4 SAMPLE AND SIZE
Scrham (2003:97) states that whether observing, interviewing, experiencing, or pursuing some combination of strategies, you cannot be everywhere at once or take in every possible viewpoint at the same time. Instead you develop certain perspectives by engaging in some activities or talking to certain people rather than others. Purposive sampling, which is one of the types of the non-probability sampling, was used. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2003:206) in purposive sampling, people or other units are chosen, as the name implies, for a particular purpose. For the purpose of this study 18 respondents were chosen through a purposive sampling.

The sample comprised of three parents, who have children in the above-mentioned schools of which one of them was the member of the School Governing Body from each school and three educators from each school of which one of the educators was the school principal. These respondents were used in this study to represent diverse perspectives on the involvement of parents in school governance.

4.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA
Data were analysed qualitatively to investigate the following:

- The interaction between parents and educators;
- The attendance of school meetings by parents
- The attendance by parents of other school activities (such as concerts, fundraising, school sport activities) by parents
- Mechanisms used by educators including the school Principal to encourage parents’ participation in school activities

The results will be presented by making use of pie charts, graphs and tables in the following paragraph.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION
In an attempt to address the objectives of this research, the qualitative method of collecting data was used. According to Bers (1986:290) interviews are undertaken to understand the real underlying factors. 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 only interviews were used because the researcher wanted to gain insight to the thinking, beliefs and perspectives of the subjects on parental involvement in school governance. It is not always easy to prevent participants from diverting from the subject.

Therefore, closed questions were used so that the participants could be kept within the subject matter. This type of question was used to minimise the risk of misinterpretation. The questions were also arranged in such a way that the interviewees could either give lengthy or short questions. Written documents, like minutes of the previous parents’ meetings of each school, were looked at.

Following is the interpretation of the data collected:

**AN INTERVIEW FOR EDUCATORS**

**DIAGRAM 4.1: AGES OF RESPONDENTS**

![Pie chart showing ages of respondents](source: Own construction)
Diagram 4.1 indicates that (40 %) of the respondents are between 20 to 30 years of age and only (10 %) are above 50 years of age. 30% are those who are between 30 and 40 years of age and 20% are between the ages of 40 to 50 years. The majority of educators are convinced that parental involvement in school governance may assist with some activities in the school. These educators also feel that if parents can be full participants in their children’s education.

**DIAGRAM 4.2: GENDER OF EDUCATORS**

![Gender of Educators](image)

*Source: Own construction*

Diagram 4.2 shows that 60% of the respondents are females and 40% are males. The reveals that females are more supportive to parental involvement in school governance whereas a small percentage of males are in favour of the idea. These females feel that parental involvement will help both educators and parents to attend to the needs of the learners. Moreover, females also feel that they play a variety of roles, from care-giver, facilitator and counsellor to educator.
Diagram 3.1 indicates that 30% of the respondents are principals and 70% are educators. Principals and educators in most schools feel that parents and teachers should take part in joint activities like, sharing knowledge and skills that will assist in the child's development.
The above table indicates that 30% of the respondents have been educators and have been teaching for a period of six to ten years while 25% of the respondents who have 16 to 20 years experience yet, 10% of those have 21 to 30 years experience. Another 10% has more than 31 years experience. Only five % of the respondents have is 0 to 5 years experience.
Educators were asked if parents were involved in school governance in their respective schools. Chart 5 indicates that the 70% of the respondents answered that parents were not involved in school governance and only 30% were involved. This clearly shows that there is a high level of non-parental involvement in school governance.
Educators were asked if the inclusion of parents in school governance is a good idea.

Diagram 6.1 shows that most educators (60%) felt that parental involvement in school governance is a good idea. These educators think that it may have a positive effect on a school development plan, curriculum and the management resources. These educators viewed parental involvement as a necessary mechanism for democracy. Few educators (40%) felt that parental involvement was not a good idea. These educators feel that teaching is for professionals only.
Educators were also asked to give the role played by their respective schools to promote parental involvement. They gave the following responses:

- Schools do not work hard enough to attract parents to their schools,
- Parents are not committed to their children’s education.
- The interaction between parents and educators is very limited
- Some parents feel that they cannot disturb professionals
- One school allows the community to use the school garden to plough so that parents can benefit from the school.

Principals were positive about the inclusion of parents in school governance and they felt that the school governing body should run the school according to the rules are given by the National Department of Education. Some of them said that the SGB should assist in creating a school environment with limited conflict between various stakeholders. Lewis and Naidoo (2004:106) highlight that, from the espoused theories of various stakeholders, one gets a picture of SGBs functioning in an open and democratic manner, with widespread consultation among all stakeholders and on-going attempts to reach decisions by consensus.

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

**DIAGRAM 7.1: AGES OF PARENTS**

Source: Own construction
Diagram 7.1 shows that the 50% of respondents are parents who are 25 to 30 years old. Whilst 30% are 31 to 40 years. Only 15% parents are between 41 and 50 years old. Only 5% are older than 50 years.

**DIAGRAM 8.1: GENDER OF PARENTS:**

![Gender of Parents Pie Chart](image1.png)

Source: Own construction

Diagram 8.1 indicates that 60% of the respondents are females and 40% are males. This is in line with an observation by Mestry and Grobler (2007:180,) that in almost every culture, females play a supportive role in a family.
Section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 strongly emphasises the need for parents to be full participants in school governance. Chart 9 shows that 40% of parents are aware of this legislation whereas 60% of the respondents know nothing about it. Parents were also asked if they attended meetings organised by their schools, and they gave different explanations. These are some of their responses:

- Some feel that participation is not necessary;
- Others have no history of being involved;
- Others had poor experience about going to school;
- Others experienced painful experiences when they were at school;
- Others claim that the complexity of the current curriculum is a challenge;
- Some parents are not sure whom to contact at school because their children are taught by different educators; and
- Few parents would like to participate and they felt that educators deliberately exclude them from taking part in school governance.
Diagram 10.1  PARENTS ATTENDANCE: PARENTS' MEETINGS

Source: Own construction

Diagram 10 shows that only 30% of parents attend meetings and 70% do not attend. Some of them claimed that these meetings were on Sunday afternoons which puts them in an inconvenient position because there is no transport for those who stay outside Zwelitsha. Others feel that their contribution may not be considered because they are illiterate. Some parents felt that right decisions are the ones made by the school and the School Governing Body and they cannot challenge their views.
TABLE 4.3: PARENTS’ ATTENDANCE: SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Source: Own construction

Chart 11 above indicates that 80% are parents who are not involved in activities organised by their children’s schools and only 20% of parents are involved.

4.7 CONCLUSION
This chapter focused on presenting the research methodology, data collected during research interpreting the data. The interpretation of data was done in relation to the existing secondary information on participation in general and on the parental involvement in school governance in particular. The following chapter will draw conclusions based on the research findings and provide recommendations on improving levels of parental involvement in school governance.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION
South Africa is a new democratic country and the stage for the exploration of parental perspectives, expectations and experiences is provided by the present government. For parents to be able to achieve their goals for their children, they must make use of these opportunities to engage in school governance. This will subsequently have an enormous effect in holding schools and educators to account for their actions to the members of the community they serve. This state of affairs will strengthen the tenets of democracy which are transparency, accountability and participation.

This chapter focuses on drawing up the conclusions and to provide recommendations based on the research that was conducted in three previously disadvantaged high schools in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town District.

5.2 FINDINGS
Following are the findings of the research conducted on the parental involvement of parents in school governance in the previously disadvantaged high schools in Zwelitsha:

5.2.1 Levels of parental involvement
The study shows that the level of parental involvement in the selected schools is very low. This is strongly related to the level of the parents’ education. Parents who are literate are more involved in school governance than those that are illiterate. According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003:85) parental involvement is strongly related to the level of mother’s education; the higher the level of maternal educational qualification the greater the extent of involvement.

5.2.2 Class structure of the society
The class structure of the society has an influence on the participation of parents in school governance. Affluent societies get more involved than those who do not
have means. The marital status of parents also have an influence in the sense that single parents have ambiguous roles to play which cause them not to have time to be involved in community activities like school governance and other school activities. Some learners in this area live with their grandparents because their parents work away from home like in big cities and other parents died and most of all, parents of these learners are still very young. Parental involvement is low because high school children are older and their parents feel less committed to their education. Most high schools in this area are supported by learners that come from villages outside Zwelitsha and as a result their parents do not really own their children’s schools.

Some parents are faced with multi dimensional challenges like, too much substance abuse and domestic violence. Others lack confidence in knowing how to be involved in their children’s schools. There are parents who are extremely affected by poverty and social chaos and their situation discourages them from being actively involved in their children’s education. Other parents do not involve themselves in school governance because of their experience with their children’s educators.

5.2.3 Days of parents meeting and school activities
The parents do not show interest in meetings and other school activities such as sport, students and staff farewells, cultural activities, student debate sessions, and school fundraising efforts (like beauty competitions, concerts, hobo and music shows). With regards to attendance of meetings, they display little concern about because if they are called to parents’ meetings, only a small percentage will attend. This is evident from the attendance list of school governing body. One of the contributing factors for non-attendance of parents meetings is that they are held on Sunday afternoons which becomes a challenge to parents who live in the villages outside Zwelitsha Township because of transport from these villages to Zwelitsha is scarce on Sundays.

This may not be the case with other parents as these parents may not committed to their children’s education and consequently do not attend parents’ meetings.
This research also reveals that high levels of working parents contribute to low levels of parental involvement in school governance and their non-participation in school activities. Some of school activities are done during working hours and working parents cannot attend these activities and the same parents feel that they need to rest over the weekend, which means that they cannot attend any school activities over the weekend. Some parents in Zwelitsha do not know their rights in their children’s education because these rights are not clearly defined by school management.

5.2.4 Lack of knowledge about school governance
Most parents know nothing about school governance and those that are aware are not keen to be involved they claim that they are too busy and have other commitments. Most of them are still of the impression that decisions about educational matters are the task of professionals and experts.

5.2.5 Limited interaction between schools and communities
Most parents in Zwelitsha Township especially those who come from outside the township are not aware that they have to be involved in the school governance. There are few parents in Zwelitsha who are aware of what roles should they play to develop their children’s schools but they do not want to have such responsibility, yet those that stay outside Zwelitsha feel that schools are the responsibility of parents that are residing where these schools are built. Also, most educators and school managers agreed that levels of parental involvement in school governance are very low in their schools.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS
Looking at the research findings, the researcher suggests the following recommendations will assist in improving levels of parental involvement in school governance in previously disadvantaged high schools in Zwelitsha, King Williams Town District. Parental involvement in school governance works indirectly on educational outcomes because it helps children build their social, learning and educational aspirations. It also has a significant effect on children’s achievement
despite all the negative factors that they come across with. The partnerships between schools and communities should be used effectively to develop local schools.

5.3.1 Strategies to enhance parental involvement

Some school managers and school governing bodies need to consider developing mechanisms to promote parental involvement in their schools. This research has revealed that most of these parents need help. The following strategies may help to enhance parental involvement:

5.3.1.1 Parents’ engagement and empowerment

Promoting high levels of parental involvement is not the issue of schools only, it also involves the community therefore, it must be worked for in a multi-dimensional strategy. The previous political regime affected most Black South Africans because it disempowered parents from being involved in the education of their children. The regime controlled all the educational activities which left an impression that education and educational decisions are the task of professionals. This means that parents from previously disadvantaged areas should be educated and be given a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the education of their children. The Department of Education should provide the training and capacity building to improve levels of parental participation in school governance. The South African government is divided into three spheres and the local government sphere is the one that is close to the people.

Municipalities are in this sphere and they are the ones that are in a position to assess the needs of their local communities and particular priorities for their own schools. These municipalities should make use of their Education Departments to assist the Provincial Department of Education to educate parents that are illiterate. Councilors are influential figures in the community because they are elected by community members to represent them in the government, therefore, parents can easily take their advice because they have confidence in them. Government and schools should introduce programmes that will involve more community members. Schools should also be opened for community members to
attend Adult Basic Education and educators should assist in facilitating teaching and learning for these parents. Local municipalities on the other hand should introduce local projects to empower parents in school communities to facilitate their involvement.

Educators and school principals should receive training and support through awareness raising campaigns. Sometimes parents do not make contributions in a meeting because they are illiterate and have no confidence in themselves. Some feel that they cannot challenge the school governing body because they believe that the views of the SGB are the correct and valuable ones. Parents should also join parental organisations where they will be mixing with educators so that they are able to understand each other on social basis. School managers and school governing bodies should look for an alternative time and day for meetings so that parents who are encountering problems with these can be accommodated. A platform for parents in the school governing to report any power abuse by school principals should be created and the Department of Education should identify and communicate channels and procedures for these complaints.

Since most parents in Black localities are illiterate, there should be clear mechanisms to ensure that communities and individuals are accountable to one another and this is done to avoid confusion. Parents should be accommodated by using a language that they understand so that they can comfortably deliberate in parents’ meetings without being confused.

5.3.1.2 Co-operation between schools and parents

It is the duty of schools and educators to create a warm reception when parents visit their schools. Some educators are threatened by the presence of certain parents in their schools. The negative attitude of educators needs to be changed to be receptive to parents. Local schools should involve community members to assess local needs and also in the process of prioritizing these needs. The members of the school governing body need to be supported by the school for them to be able to carry out the tasks they are in charge of. The processes of
school development should be inclusive and ensure that local accountability structures are actively involved.

The Department of Education should also introduce and support participatory processes such community education and parent training programmes in schools. It is important to make parents even those that are shy to feel that they are there to be given an opportunity to participate and their presence and participation is valuable. If parents attend the meetings and other school activities, their contribution in decision-making would bring power to affect climate of the school. They should be involved in the policy-making committees and site-based collaborative decision-making. The inter-departmental relations are of great importance.

5.3.1.3 Collaboration with the community, private and other public institutions

Some of the high schools in Zwelitsha are working with the Department of South African Police Services, but this is done only in cases of emergency when there is a crisis in a certain school. Hospitals and clinics as public institutes should also work with schools to promote a healthy lifestyle of learners and educators. The school management and the school governing bodies can invite the Department of Health to visit the schools on a regular basis to do health education on various aspects of health that are pertinent to learners.

If the previously disadvantaged areas want to have educated, successful and fully functioning citizens, community members from those areas must be involved in their children’s education. The partnerships between schools and communities can be beneficial in the sense that the community could contribute with their respective assets to the school. Therefore, schools would save money that would be paid for services which through collaboration with the community would be acquired without any cost.
5.3.1.4 Invitation of complaints and welcoming of criticisms

Schools must be open to criticism and not be threatened by the presence of parents in school premises. Criticism may assist school managers to be exposed to alternative points of view. School should have suggestion boxes for parents and other community members to come up with their suggestions. Common needs and purposes can be discovered if parents and schools work together.

5.4 CONCLUSION

It is worth mentioning that levels of parental involvement in school governance in the previously disadvantaged areas is low. The impact of what parents do at home with their children is much more significant than other educational influences. Education and welfare of children is in the interest of both schools and parents. It is the responsibility of school managers and educators to manage the boundaries between the school community and the wider community.

In Chapter 1 the introduction, background and rationale to the study, the statement of the problem as well as the definition of terms were given.

In Chapter 2 the literature on school governance was reviewed. The participation of parents in school governance was explored. The first section of the chapter explained the school governance as a concept making reference to the South African Schools Act, 1996. The second section dealt with the importance of parental involvement in school governance and the last section provided the mechanism of promoting participation in school governance.

Chapter 3 dealt with the strategies of encouraging the participation of parents in the school governance proposed. The causes of non-parental involvement were discussed before proposing the strategies.

The focus of Chapter 4 was on research methodology, data collection and interpretation of data. The study made use of interview questionnaire which was distributed to the educators and parents whose children are studying in the three randomly selected high schools in the Zwelitsha District. Data was interpreted and presented making use of bar charts and pie charts.
Chapter 5 dealt with the findings, conclusion and recommendations drawn from the secondary and primary information. Findings were categorised as follows:

- Levels of parental involvement
- Class structure of the society
- Days of parents’ meeting and school activities
- Lack of knowledge about school governance
- Limited interaction between schools and communities

Based on the findings of the secondary and empirical research the following strategies that can be used by schools to enhance parental involvement were recommended:

- Engaged parents with the aim of empowering them
- The co-operation between schools and parents
- Collaboration with the community, private and other public institutions
- Invitation of complaints and welcoming of criticisms
LIST OF REFERENCES

Call to action, mobilising citizens to build a South Africa African, a statement by Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, 1999.


