BLACK PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

by

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Promoter: Professor Prakash Singh

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DECLARATION

I declare that:

BLACK PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

is my own work, that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that it has not been previously presented by me for a degree at another university.

SM MBOKODI

DATE:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my promoter, Professor Prakash Singh for his guidance, his continued support and encouragement throughout and his analytical but diplomatic critiques. I am humbled and greatly inspired by him.

My thanks are due to the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) for creating opportunities for staff to develop by allowing me to go on sabbatical and research leave. Without these opportunities, this work would never have been completed.

I am especially grateful to the library staff at NMMU, specifically Ms Pauline Daleman and Ms Omaya Allie, for their unfailing assistance in accessing relevant literature upon request.

Special gratitude is extended to all the principals, teachers, learners and chairpersons of the SGBs of the ten schools that participated in the research. I thank them for their willingness to go above and beyond their call of duty to accommodate me in their busy schedules.

I wish to thank the Port Elizabeth District Office of the Department of Education for allowing me access to the schools to conduct research.

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To all my friends who contributed towards the completion of this work, thank you guys for your encouragement and unfailing support.
ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in the backdrop of Section 24(1)(a) of the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 which promulgated that parents should be involved in the education of their children. To fulfil this requirement, each school is expected to have a legally constituted School Governing Body (SGB) as part of school governance. The involvement of the SGB does not exclude parents involving themselves in school activities as individuals but as organised groups geared towards working on a specific project of the school. Involvement also implies helping the child at home. The study investigated the extent to which black parents involve themselves in school activities as envisaged by the SASA.

Conceptual literature relating to issues of parental involvement in school was reviewed. Specifically the concept parent/parental involvement as it relates to black parents was explored. Factors promoting or hindering parental involvement in school were also examined.

The research is qualitative. Participants included principals, teachers, learners and chairpersons of school governing bodies of ten selected schools in the major townships of Port Elizabeth. Views and experiences of participants were captured and explained through in-depth interviews and observations. Results are discussed in relation to the relevant literature, allowing grounded theory to emerge.

What emerged was a desperate situation of non-involvement of black parents in school activities largely because of the failure of the Department of Education (DoE) to capacitate all parties involved in strategies to involve parents in school. The potential for generalizability and transferability is discussed in the report and possible intervention strategies are recommended at micro- and macro-levels.

The study demonstrates that the DoE needs to follow up on its policies to ensure that the envisaged change is realized.
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>American Psychological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>Curriculum Education Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESs</td>
<td>Curriculum Education Specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPTD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECDoE</td>
<td>Eastern Cape Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDO</td>
<td>Education Development Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDOs</td>
<td>Education Development Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEIs</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immuno Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>IQMS</td>
<td>Integrated Quality Management Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPTOSA</td>
<td>National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCS</td>
<td>National Curriculum Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes Based education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SASA</td>
<td>South African Schools Act (84) of 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAIRR</td>
<td>South African Institute of Race Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGB</td>
<td>School Governing Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGBs</td>
<td>School Governing Bodies</td>
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<td>TB</td>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Until recently the South African education system was characterized by complex bureaucratic structures where the decisions were taken at the highest level and little room was left for a few parents at the lowest level (Van der Westhuizen & Mosoge, 2001:190). This tended to exclude the parents from taking an active part in the education of their children. Consequently, parents are believed not to be too keen to involve themselves in school activities because of the detachment of the school from the community it purports to serve. Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (2001:190) are of the opinion that black parents are not eager to be involved because they have no tradition of participation in school activities and it will therefore take time before they become fully involved. Molepo (2000:70) is of the view that the relationship between parents in rural areas and schools is poor.

Molepo (2000:70) traces this parental uninvolvment to its beginnings. According to him, as societies developed, the need for properly educated people increased and parents were gradually replaced by teachers. In this process the weaknesses of the parents were replaced by the strengths of the teachers, while the strengths of the parents were lost.

However with the promulgation of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA), the parents are required to participate and be fully involved in the education of their children and the governance of the schools. SASA provides for this involvement through the school governing bodies (SGBs) in whom the governance of every public school is vested. The parent component constitutes 60% of the SGB and the chairperson should be a parent. The functions of this body include *inter alia* (SASA):

- involvement in the determination of the language policy of the school (Section 6 (2));
- determining religious observances at the school (Section 7);
- adopting a code of conduct for learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school (Section 8(1));
- suspending or expelling a learner after a fair hearing (Section 9(1));
- determining the extramural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of curriculum policy (Section 21(1)(b)); and
- purchasing textbooks and educational materials (Section 21(1)(c)).

Molepo (2000:70) observes that this democratization of formal education is an attempt to regain the strengths of parents and to eliminate the weaknesses of the school.

This study will investigate the extent to which black parents have taken up the challenge of involving themselves in the areas that the Act envisaged, especially in the light of Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge’s (2001:190) contention that until now, schools grapple with the problem of involving parents in school activities.

In her definition of the concept ‘parent involvement in school’ Lareau (1989:3) cites among other things, preparing children for school, attending school events and fulfilling any requests teachers make of parents. This definition includes providing the children with a place to do homework and ensuring the completion thereof. According to her, this kind of involvement improves performance. This study will examine whether parents do in fact attend parent meetings or not especially since these meetings keep them abreast of everything that happens in school. It will also be ascertained if parents do help their children with homework and ensure that it is completed. It will be investigated if parents consciously provide their children with a suitable place to study and do their homework.

Most black people in South Africa especially in the Eastern Cape live in extended families where involvement is not only the responsibility of the immediate family, but also aunts, uncles, grandparents and older siblings who are school going take as much responsibility as the parents do. One of the objectives of this study is to establish the extent to which extended family involves itself in the education of the children.
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Parents send their children to school to learn. One of the ways in which this objective can be realized is to motivate parents to be involved in their children’s scholastic activities. Research has shown consistently that with the increase in parental involvement, there is a concomitant increase in student achievement (Ramirez, 2001:130). According to this view, there was a time in the past when the parents’ role in their children’s education only included selecting the school for their children, creating a home atmosphere for social and emotional development of their children and the shaping of their children’s values and morals.

Gonzalez (2002:132) cites numerous studies that identified the existence of relationships between parental involvement and such student variables as academic achievement, sense of well-being, attendance, attitude, homework readiness, grades and educational aspirations. Gonzalez (2002:132) concluded that parental involvement in child and adolescent education generally benefits children’s learning and school success. Studies show parental involvement to be positively related to high school student’s achievement, time spent on homework, favourable attitudes towards school, likelihood of staying in school and educational aspirations beyond the high school level and academic motivation. When parents were involved in their children’s schooling, the children performed better academically and were more engaged in school. Learners reported more effort, concentration and attention across four main subject areas: Mathematics, English, Social Studies and Science. Researchers (Gonzalez, 2002:132) concluded that parental involvement is even more likely to be beneficial to student’s school success when it occurs within an authoritative parenting style typified by parental acceptance, warmth and behavioural supervision that allows for some degree of democracy and autonomy on the part of the child. Gonzalez (2002:132) adds that parental involvement offers a sense of security and comfort in a rather unpredictable society as the adolescent strives for self-development and a sense of identity. She goes on to say that when parents showed an interest in their child’s education by being actively involved, students were more likely to seek challenging tasks, persist through academic challenges, and experience satisfaction in their school work. Gonzalez (2002:132) also observed that the opposite was also true; lack of parental control led to excessive peer influence.
which in turn led to improper negative outcomes, ranging from truancy to drug abuse, from depression to low grades; it can also lead to poor attendance and disciplinary problems in school, which influences the dropout behaviour.

Many schools spend considerable energy and resources on the facilitation of active parental involvement in the education of their children. Sheldon (2002:83) observes that educators continue to struggle to understand why some parents become involved in their children’s schooling while others do not, especially in the light of the research findings that highlighted the link between parental involvement and school achievement. Based on his research findings, Sheldon (2002:84-85) identified the following factors that influence parental involvement in education:

• Parental beliefs and social networks as social capita;
• Parental involvement and socio-economic status (SES);
• Parental involvement and cultural capital.

These factors are discussed below.

1.2.1 Parental beliefs and social networks as social capital

Sheldon (2002:84) criticizes the popular belief that characterizes parents as relatively isolated individuals who only interact with their child and their child’s teacher. He argues that parents are social actors and therefore maintain social networks that may affect the role they play in their children’s education and these networks are in turn informed by parental beliefs and background factors. These beliefs and networks can function as a resource for schools and teachers. Parental beliefs have to do with believing that (Sheldon, 2002:84-85):

• Parents can affect their children’s education.
• The school desires their help.
• They have the skills and knowledge to help their children.
• They can teach and assist their children.
• They can find extra resources for their children if necessary.
Attempts to understand why parents choose to participate in the schooling of their children must therefore consider the degree to which parents believe their actions will lead to increased learning and academic success of their children. Naturally, parental involvement depends on the parents’ current knowledge to assist their children in view of the rapid pace of curriculum change. (This will be further discussed in the literature review chapter).

1.2.2 Parental involvement and socio-economic status (SES)

It is believed that the SES of the parents predicts parental involvement. Lareau (1989:2) posits that “teachers ask for parental involvement; social class shapes the resources which parents have at their disposal to comply with teacher’s requests for assistance”. The implication is that parents who have resources will be more involved than parents who do not. Sheldon (2002:85) concurs and adds that middle-class families are more involved in school and involved in different ways than working class families. In a letter to the editor printed in Educational Leadership (2007:89), a contributor commented on the achievement gap, adding that many middle-class parents can and do pay to ensure that their children move ahead and stay ahead. Many poor and working class parents do not have the financial resources to give their children the extra boost that tutoring can provide or to compensate for an inadequate teacher. According to a research study undertaken by Lareau (1989: 3), between 40% and 60% of working class and lower-class parents fail to attend parent-teacher conferences. In South Africa, poor parents do not attend teacher conferences because the language used at the conferences is beyond their literacy levels and they cannot afford to take time off from their hectic work schedules. For middle-class parents these figures are nearly halved. Further results indicated that in areas of promoting verbal development, reading to children, taking children to the library, attending school events, enrolling children in summer school and complaints to the principal, middle-class parents consistently play a more active role in schooling than do their working-class and lower-class counterparts.

Lareau (1989: 4) further advanced three perspectives for the difference in the incidence of parental involvement namely:
Firstly, the value system. She argues that the higher SES parents realize the importance of education and feel confident of their right to be involved in the school. This perspective suggests that the opposite is true of the lower SES parents. The argument is that parents’ educational goal and motivation have an impact on their children’s school achievement.

Secondly, unequal levels of parental involvement among the educational institutions. Lareau (1989:7) argues that schools make middle-class families feel more welcome than working-class or lower-class families who are “frozen out” of schools. This view accuses teachers (who are by definition middle-class) of being less comfortable, less friendly and less talkative with lower-class and working-class clients.

1.2.3 Parental involvement and cultural capital

The third perspective argues for cultural capital (Lareau, 1989:7). According to this perspective, schools use particular linguistic structures, authority patterns, and types of curricula with which children of higher SES are familiar on school entry; cultural experiences in the home differentially facilitate children’s adjustment to school and academic achievement.

In the light of the foregoing postulations, this study will investigate the extent to which the above factors influence black parental involvement in school.

Sheldon (2002:85) also argues that traditional mother-father families have been shown to be more involved in their children’s education than other family structures like single-parent families, child-headed households, grandmother headed household, and so on. Hence the problem investigated in this study was the extent of involvement of black parents in the education of their children. Arising from the main problem, are the following sub-problems:

- Are parents equal partners in the education of their children? Do they participate by attending parent meetings so that they can be informed about what goes on in school?
To what extent do parents meet their financial obligations as required by SASA?

To what extent are effective communication lines open between parents and the school community?

What are the barriers of black parental involvement in education as experienced by the principals, teachers, learners and the chairpersons of the SGBs?

Are teachers sensitized to involve parents in their day-to-day activities? Do they have the knowledge and skills to manage their roles and functions as defined in SASA?

Are SGB members (as represented by the chairperson of the SGB) capacitated to deal with matters of school governance, leadership and management as envisaged by SASA?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

De Vos (2002: 404) describes aims of a study as broad conditions or outcomes that are desired by the community of interest. Objectives refer to those more specific changes in programmes, policies or practices that are believed to contribute to the broader goal. Stating broad goals and specific objectives clarifies the proposed ends and means of the intervention research project.

The aim of this study is to investigate the extent of black parental involvement in the education of their children. The objectives of the study are:

- The extent to which parents are equal partners in the education of their children and whether they attend parent meetings so that they can be informed about what goes on in school.
- The extent to which parents meet their financial obligations to supplement allocation by the DoE as stipulated in the SASA.
- The effectiveness of communication between home and school.
- Barriers and challenges to black parental involvement in school as experienced by principals, teachers, learners and the chairpersons of the SGBs.
The role of in-service teacher programmes to prepare teachers adequately to involve parents in school activities.

Capacity of SGB members to be meaningfully involved in school governance, leadership and management of the schools.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The research method for this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. In this chapter a brief discussion of the research methods will be undertaken.

Education is social in nature because it deals with people that think and feel and interpret phenomena as they occur in social settings. People base their interpretations on their frames of reference, not in isolation. In choosing an appropriate research method to investigate the extent of black parental involvement in the education of their children, due consideration was given to the fact that parents and children have expectations of each other. Parents love their children, and want nothing but the best for them; they are responsible for their children’s education and want them to achieve in school. They are accountable for what eventually happens to their children after formal education is over. Parental involvement in school therefore can be a sensitive issue, because it goes beyond the present to a future that has to be shaped not only by teachers but by parents as equal partners in education. For this reason, the qualitative research method approach was chosen as the most appropriate and suitable method to investigate black parental involvement in education.

1.4.1 The qualitative research method

The qualitative research method is a systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a bounded social context. It is a means for describing and attempting to understand the observed regularities in what people do, say and report as their experience (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 1993:99). The focus of attention is on the perceptions and experiences of the participants. What individuals say they believe, the feelings they express, and explanations they give are treated as significant realities. This study will investigate the perceptions of principals, teachers,
learners and parents (as represented by the SGB) with regard to their extent of involvement in schools.

**Interviews** were conducted with principals, teachers, learners and chairpersons of SGBs of ten selected schools. Purpose sampling was used in the identification of schools for the study (the rationale for the choice of this sampling method is discussed in Chapter Three). The purpose of interviewing is to establish what is in and on someone else’s mind and to elicit from people those aspects such as feelings, thoughts and intentions that cannot be directly observed. Interviewees were asked open-ended questions in order to access their perspectives. Interview approaches are discussed in Chapter Three.

**Focus-group interviews** were conducted with teachers and the learners to investigate the extent of involvement of parents in their schools. Focus-group interviews are interviews in which a number of people are interviewed simultaneously and share ideas both with the interviewer and with each other (Stanger, 1998:98). Clarke (2000:77) defines a focus group as a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on the topic that is the subject of the research on the basis of personal experiences.

As pointed out by Clarke (2000:77), in this type of interview, the investigator is primarily concerned with obtaining insights into the attitudes and opinions of groups, rather than acquiring specific information from individuals. The size of the focus groups is discussed in Chapter Three.

There are limitations to how much can be learned from what people say. To understand fully the complexities of many situations, **observation** of the phenomenon of interest may be the most appropriate research method. De Vos (2002:28) advises that the researcher should strive at all times to gaining feelings, impressions and experiencing the circumstances of the real world of participants by living alongside them and by interpreting and sharing their activities. In this study, I undertook to observe the participants in their natural setting (the school) and took notes of my observations (inquiry by observation is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three).
1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The concepts that will be defined in the following paragraphs are black parent/person; parental involvement; parent; education.

1.5.1 Black parent

A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles (1996) (which shall henceforth be referred to as the Dictionary) defines a black person as a dark-skinned person of African origin, belonging to a people whose home language is of the Sintu or Bantu group historically during the apartheid era. In apartheid legislation, “Black” was the last official racial designation applied to black African people, earlier terms being Native and Bantu.

This definition excludes other South African race groups who are not Whites like the Coloureds and the Indians. A differentiation between these races is made succinctly in an article in the Eastern Province Herald of 10 April 1982 (as cited in the Dictionary), which read, “The municipality fired 215 black workers at the hostel and employed coloured labourers in their place”. Mathiane in Frontline of 31 October 1982 (as quoted in the Dictionary) wrote that “When applying for overseas scholarships, the Indians get the bulk of the money because they are studying Masters and fancy degrees while the black-black is battling on a first degree maybe”.

Another definition provided in the Dictionary states that a black person is a person from any of the groups that were historically disadvantaged by apartheid laws.

In this study a black person is used to refer to a person who is dark-skinned, of African origin, whose home language belongs to the Sintu (Bantu) group, and who was historically disadvantaged by apartheid laws. Children of black parents attended schools in the black areas/townships that were designated black residential areas as defined by the Group Areas Act No 41 of 1950 (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Black schools are schools that were historically serviced by the former Department of Education and Training (DET) as opposed to former Model A, B and C schools.
1.5.2 Parental/parent involvement

The two concepts parent involvement and parental involvement will be used interchangeably.

Sheldon (2002:83) defines parent involvement as parents’ investment of resources in their children. It is a range of behaviours, including ensuring that children have breakfast before they go to school, volunteering at school, helping children with homework, and holding a position on the local school board. According to this view, parental involvement is two-fold; namely:

- parent involvement at home, and
- parent involvement at school.

Parent involvement at home is parent-child interactions on school related or other learning activities. Sheldon (2000:83) refers to it as the “curriculum of the home” and believes it to be an important contributor to children’s education and development and success in school.

Parent involvement in school includes interacting with the teachers and other school personnel where parents demonstrate to their children that education is an important and valuable activity. Sheldon (ibid) argues that parent involvement in school provides parents with first hand information about the school environment; it allows parents to interact with and observe teachers as they perform their jobs and enables parents to observe their children interacting with other students. Ultimately these experiences may place parents in a better position to support their children’s learning.

A contributor in The National Education Association’s Newsletter (11 June, 2003) adds to this definition factors like helping your child to set challenging academic standards, limiting TV viewing on school nights or becoming an advocate for better education in your community and state. It involves asking your child, “How was school today?”
Heystek (1999:22-23) measures parental involvement by five variables viz. participation of parents in management activities, participation in teaching and education, participating in non-academic activities, attending organized activities and parental visits and keeping contact with the school.

For the purpose of this study, parental involvement encompasses all the descriptions given in the paragraphs above.

1.5.3 Parent

Ramirez (2001:113) defines parent as the child's biological parents as well as other family members like the uncles, aunties, grandmothers, grandfathers including siblings, adult friends and any older individuals who take special interest and help the child to develop and understand life values and to build self-confidence. For the purpose of this study, this definition will be adopted.

1.5.4 Education

Hills (1982:137) defines education as the passing on of knowledge from one generation to the next, and providing people with skills that enable them to analyze, diagnose and thus question what they learn. This implies that education is the transmission of what is worthwhile. The other implication is that the process of education rules out coercion. Also embedded in this definition are the concepts of growth and moulding.

When a person is said to have grown, it is implied that he is encouraged to develop his/her own innate qualities, rather than those prescribed by authority (Hills, 1982:161). This implies that the educator is supposed to know what kind of person he wishes to produce and works towards that. Moulding and growth tend to converge.
For the purpose of this study, education encompasses all the activities that take place formally at school, and informally outside the classroom which are aimed at the growth and development of the learner.

1.6 ASSUMPTIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

1.6.1 Assumptions

This study investigates the extent of involvement of black parents in the education of their children.

It is assumed that all parents of school going children are interested in the education of their children especially after the promulgation of the SASA that makes it compulsory for children to attend school until the age of 15 or grade nine whichever comes first. It is also a requirement that parents involve themselves in the education of their children both as individuals and as represented by the SGBs.

It is also assumed that all schools have a legally constituted SGB which functions as envisaged by the SASA and the SGB members are aware of their roles, responsibilities and functions. It is assumed that the Department of Education (DoE) capacitates the SGBs on an ongoing basis as their term of office is three years, on matters of school governance, leadership and management.

Teachers are expected to involve parents in the day-to-day activities of the school. It is assumed that from the time the SASA was promulgated to date, the DoE took the initiative to capacitate teachers on how to involve parents in school. As time progress, teachers either retire, resign or die and new teachers assume their positions. The education system also faces new challenges and developments with the passage of time. It is therefore assumed that the DoE (through organs like the Educational Development Officers (EDOs), CESs, etc.) conducts continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) workshops to ensure that teachers remain capacitated on how to involve parents in school.

1.6.2 Delimitations
The field of study in investigating the extent of involvement of parents in education is all the parents of school going age in the Port Elizabeth District. However, due to the vastness of the area, the time and financial resources required for an in-depth investigation of all schools in the district, the study is limited to ten schools; five primary and five secondary schools. As this is a qualitative study, the size of this sample is justified. In Chapter Three, generalizability, validity and reliability of qualitative data are discussed in detail.

1.7 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The study investigates the extent of black parental involvement in the education of their children as envisaged by SASA. It was explained why the study is significant in the light of this Act.

In Chapter One, the problem and related sub-problems have been stated. The aim of the study and research questions has been given. The research methods and the rationale for choice have been explained briefly as this topic is dealt with in detail in Chapter Three. A detailed literature review is undertaken in Chapter Two, however, brief comments have been made on the subject in this chapter. Concepts that have been used in the study have been defined and assumptions about the topic provided. Delimitation of the field of study is provided in detail in Chapter Three. However, a few comments have been made in this chapter.

Chapter Two reviews literature on parental involvement in education: its benefits and its challenges. Chapter Three discusses theoretical frameworks which underpin the methodology that is used as well as data collection techniques and procedures. Chapter Four reports on research findings from interviews with the principals of schools. Chapter Five reports on findings from focus group interviews with the teachers. Chapter Six reports on findings from focus group interviews with learners. Chapter Seven reports on findings from interviews with the chairpersons of the SGBs. Chapter Eight covers the analysis of findings while Chapter Nine provides an exposition of the recommendations and conclusion.
2.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature review is an essential component of any study. Every research project begins with a review of literature on the subject. The aim is to establish what has been done in a chosen field of study. It commences with a review of the existing scholarship or available body of knowledge to examine how other scholars have investigated the research problem in order to learn from them. The researcher wants to establish how other researchers have theorized and conceptualized what they have found empirically, what instrumentation they have used and to what effect. The researcher is interested in the most recent, credible and relevant scholarship in the area being investigated (Mouton, 2002:87).

Mouton (2002:87) spells out that the literature reviewer looks for definitions, different theories, models and hypotheses, existing data and empirical findings that have been produced by previous research and measuring instruments that have been developed to measure the extent or scope of the subject under investigation. This assists the researcher not to merely duplicate previous studies, but to identify available instrumentation that has proven validity and reliability.

Literature review was undertaken to identify theories and definitions of parental involvement in education, to discover different models of parental involvement as well as to examine different theories on the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children in general and black parents in particular.

The partnership between parents and schools has been formalized by SASA. Section 18 identifies parents as the official partners in the governance of their children’s school. Cotton (2001:1) defines governance as any activity which provides parents with the opportunity of taking part in decision-making about school programmes which include goal setting, development and implementation of programme activities, assessment, personnel decisions and funding allocations. In
ac accordance with this Act, parents constitute the majority of the members on the
governing body of a school. Heystek (in Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillijord, 2002:111) comments that this official collaboration does not mean that there is a partnership between the school and the parents for the wellbeing of the children. It is at the most a starting point for better relationships and improved involvement of parents in school activities.

The principle underlying this partnership is the fact that the family is the primary educating structure for children. The children’s basic right implies that parents accept a particular responsibility for the child’s wellbeing, protection and growth towards adulthood. Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:111) identifies schools as a formalized extension of the family and are therefore expected to adhere to the same norms and values as the family. This relationship creates the opportunity for parents and teachers to become involved in a more formal and structured partnership relating to the education of the child.

Blankstein (2004:167) believes that nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families/community working together in partnership. He further notes that greater parental involvement leads to greater student achievement irrespective of factors such as SES or ethnic background. Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:109) concurs, but cautions that the goal of encouraging parental involvement should be the improvement of teaching and learning rather than just improving parental involvement for the sake of involvement per se.

Parents are only one element among many possible partners in the school community, but they are an important component because of the difference they can make when they are actively involved in organized school activities. Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:109) postulates that many black parents, especially in historically disadvantaged areas, may not be able to make financial contributions to the development of schools, but they can assist their children with schoolwork and motivate them to do as well as possible.

The following paragraphs will examine at how different writers define parental involvement in education.
2.2 DEFINING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Cotton (2001:1) defines parental involvement as including several different forms of participation in education and with the schools. According to her, parents support their children’s schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations. They can become more involved in helping their children to improve their school work – providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modelling desired behaviour (such as reading for pleasure), monitoring homework, and actively tutoring their children at home. Outside the home, parents can serve as advocates for the school. They can volunteer to help out with school activities, work in the classroom, or take an active role in the governance and decision-making necessary for planning, developing, and providing an education for the community’s children. Kinds of involvement can include telephone and written home-school communications, attending school functions and serving as classroom volunteers. Edwards and Alldred (2000:3) concur and add the notion of transforming the home setting into an educational context, including homework schemes to develop children’s curriculum skills and involving parents in these.

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

- **Type 1**: Basic obligations of parents covering the provision of positive home school conditions that support children’s learning.
- **Type 2**: Basic obligation of schools covering a range of communication from school to home.
- **Type 3**: Parent involvement at school in the classroom and attending events.
- **Type 4**: Parent involvement in learning activities at home, including parent, child and teacher-initiated.
- **Type 5**: Parent involvement in governance and advocacy.
- **Type 6**: Collaborating with community, covering resources and services that strengthen home-school links which list decision-making and management, home-school communication, school support for families,
family and community help for schools, school support for learning at home, collaboration with community agencies, and community education.

Ndazi (1999:10) defines parental involvement as the availability of parents to work with teachers in the governing structures of schools in the determination of school policy and vision; managing the resources and budgets and selecting staff. This definition assumes that parents have the capacity to engage in these activities.

For the purpose of this study, parental involvement in education is defined as all the actions performed by parents as explained in the paragraphs above.

2.3 RATIONALE FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.3.1 Parental involvement and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

In South Africa the implementation of the NCS represents a change in the curriculum and in methods of teaching. The focus has shifted from teacher-centred learning to more co-operative learning. This new approach focuses on the acquisition of skills and competences instead of on the collection of theoretical facts. This implies a more learner-centred learning style, which requires learners to do more work in their own time. To accomplish this effectively, they may need more resources, like books, pictures, journals and most importantly, more assistance from their parents. According to Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:112), although the approach is good in theory, the problem is that learners from lower socio-economic areas, like the historically disadvantaged areas in South Africa, may not have sufficient resources to take advantage of the new curriculum. He fears that this problem may create a bigger division between schools and communities in richer and poorer areas of the country. Parents, especially in the historically disadvantaged areas, may not have the required time or skills to assist their children in this new teaching method. However if they are very motivated, their contributions may still assist their children to adapt to the new curriculum. In contrast, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2000:3) add that even where parents have recorded doubts about involvement, their misgivings are not related to doubts about their capability, but often to a lack of adequate
information. This suggests that the willingness is there, but that capacity building is lacking.

Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2000:112) believes that a partnership between parents and schools is an instrument to improve and develop the school, because parents involve themselves in the school’s activities, because they think it will benefit their children’s school and the child’s education. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al’s (2000:3) findings, parents involve themselves in the school’s activities because they believe that they should be involved and that their involvement will make a constructive contribution to the development of the school. They perceive that their children or children’s teachers want and expect their involvement. Parental involvement covers a whole spectrum - from establishing structures for homework performance to teaching for understanding and developing student learning strategies.

Kahn (in Calitz et al., 2002:113) believes that parental participation in school activities and parent assistance with their children’s homework can improve both the academic achievement of children and the relationship between home and school. Blankstein (2004:167) concurs that support and involvement of students’ families and the community at large is fundamental to achievement in schools. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2000:1) also note that parental involvement is related to student achievement and personal attributes conducive to achievement, for example, self-regulation and perceptions of academic competence.

Edwards and Allred (2000:3) postulate that parental attitudes towards and involvement in their children’s learning in the home and at school have an influence on the children’s level and quality of learning, development and attainment at all ages. Improved parental attitudes towards the school and improved parental self-concepts characteristically result when parents become involved in their children’s learning. Cotton (2000: 4) and Hornby (2000:1-2) add that parent involvement has positive effects on student attitudes and social behaviour, and more positive parental attitudes towards teachers and schools. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:260) believe that community input into the school curriculum could also help to ensure that learners develop desirable attitudes.
Another factor that Cotton (2001:4) identifies is that parental involvement supports students' learning, behavior and attitudes regardless of factors such as parents' income, educational level and whether or not parents are employed. That is, the involvement of parents who are well-educated, well-to-do, or have more time to be involved has not been shown to be more beneficial than the involvement of less-advantaged parents. All parent involvement works and works well. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2000:3) established from research that even where parents have recorded doubts about involvement, their misgivings have been related not to doubts about their capability, but often to a lack of adequate information. Edwards and Allred (2000:3) concur and add that across the political spectrum, parental involvement and home-school partnerships are regarded as, variously, enhancing the educational performance of children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds, as a market mechanism or communication approach to improving schools’ effectiveness for all children.

Blankstein (2004: 168) notes that:

*The accurate predictor of student academic achievement is the ability of the students’ family to create a home environment that encourages learning; to communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for achievement and to become involved in the students’ education.*

Cotton (2001:3) asserts from research that:

- Parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement.
- The more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects.
- There are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home e.g. reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers.
The more active forms of parent involvement produce greater achievement benefits than the more passive ones. That means, if parents receive phone calls, read and sign written communications from the school, and perhaps attend and listen during parent teacher conferences, greater achievement benefits accrue than would be the case with no parent involvement at all.

Greater achievement benefits are noted when parent involvement is active, when parents work with their children at home, certainly, but also when they attend and actively support school activities and when they help out in classrooms or on field trips, and so on.

The earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects will be.

Active parent involvement is more beneficial than passive involvement, but passive forms of involvement are better than no involvement at all.

Direct parent involvement in instruction seems to be the single most powerful approach for fostering achievement benefit.

School personnel benefit from the improved rapport that generally accompanies increased parent involvement. This rapport is often expressed in parents' increased willingness to support schools with their labour and resources during fundraising activities or special projects.

Hornby (2000:1-2) adds the following benefits of parental involvement:

- improved student performance;
- improved teacher morale;
- improved school climate;
- increased parental satisfaction with schools;
- increased self-confidence of parents involved;
- overall school improvement;
- improved communication between parents and children;
- high school attendance and less disruptive behaviour;
- increased likelihood of completing high school and attending college;
- a sense of accomplishment for parents;
- higher parental expectations of children;
- improved study habits among children;
- increased likelihood of parents deciding to continue their own education;
- decreased need for special education placement;
- less unemployment and fewer contacts with the criminal justice system;
- promotes children’s achievement from pre-school through secondary education.

Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:260) point out that the community has a direct interest in what is taught at schools, because schools perpetuate the community’s beliefs, values and traditions. Through community participation in the work of the school, parents may be more interested in the things their children are doing, and this may in turn help to reduce the number of learners who drop out of school. Since many school leavers will stay within the community and become active participants in its social, economic, cultural and political life, the community should be shown how to make inputs into the curriculum in such a way that learners may be prepared for adult life.

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2000:2) view parental-role construction for involvement in children’s education as reflecting parents’ expectations and beliefs about what they should do in relation to children’s schooling. It defines the range of activities that parents believe are important, necessary, and permissible for their own engagement in children’s schooling. Consistent with the role theory, parents believe that involvement in children’s schooling is a normal requirement and responsibility of parenting.

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2000:2) further argue that parent / parental involvement in education appears to influence student outcomes because it offers modeling, reinforcement and instruction that supports the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours associated with successful school performance. Parents’ involvement activities provide children with multiple opportunities to observe and learn from their parents’ modeling of attitudes, knowledge, and skills pertinent to learning, to receive reinforcement and feedback on personal performance and capability, and to engage in instructional interactions related to homework content and learning processes. Parents often serve as salient models from whom children
learn. Modeling theory (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2000:2) suggests that children acquire knowledge of skills, processes, concepts and personal capabilities through observation. In observing parents’ involvement behaviours, children learn through processes involving attention, retention, symbolic representation of observed events and subsequent production of related behaviours. Modeling is particularly influential when models are perceived by the child as competent and powerful, possessing skills and abilities that they value, and similar to self. It is also particularly influential when the tasks at hand are unfamiliar or not immediately followed by observable consequences.

Reinforcement is a mechanism through which parents’ involvement influences students’ outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2000:2). It suggests that behaviour patterns occur and are maintained because of their consequences. The children learn behaviour when they consistently associate them with desired consequences and this increases the likelihood that the child will demonstrate similar skills, attitudes, and behaviour again. Parents are well suited because they often have direct knowledge of reinforcement contingencies effective for the individual child and are often able to respond to behaviour directly and immediately whereas the teacher may find it difficult to administer contingencies of reinforcement with sufficient frequency or consistency because they have to work with groups.

Parents’ involvement activities also appear to influence student outcomes through instructional interactions that range from simple queries to processes intended to develop strategic understanding and problem-solving capacity. Parents’ instructional activities appear salient to students’ learning of attitudes, skills, and knowledge associated with school success. In collaborative learning, (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2000:2) parents share information and structure task related processes in ways that enable the child to learn effectively and assume appropriate personal responsibility for learning. Such instructional activities may include directing child attention to task components, simplifying the task as needed, explaining new information, relating information to similar contexts, or responding to questions. Parents sometimes have advantages over teachers in instructional roles, for example, they tend to respond to their children’s unique learning preferences and styles which may be particularly appropriate to the child’s abilities and understanding.
Gonzalez (2002:1) concurs with the above benefits of parental involvement in education and adds to academic achievement such variables as a sense of well-being, attendance, attitude, homework readiness, grades and educational aspirations. Gonzalez (2002:1) postulates that the benefits of parental involvement are not exclusive to the elementary school context: She argues that:

*Across a range of studies, there has emerged a strong conclusion that parental involvement in child and adolescent education generally benefits children’s learning and school success; parental involvement is important to a students’ education all the way to high school level.*

Specifically for adolescents, parental involvement encourages students to spend time on homework and to develop favourable attitudes towards school thereby increasing the likelihood of staying in school and having educational aspirations beyond high school level. Her studies illustrated that during the middle grades, students often exhibited disturbing downturn in motivation, and adolescents’ academic motivation declines over time. This happens across diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.

Gonzalez (2002:2) further notes that relationships exist between parenting styles and parental involvement, the locus of control and parental involvement, the mastery and performance goal orientations of high school students and parental involvement and motivation and parental involvement. These factors will be briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

### 2.3.2 Parental involvement and parenting style

Gonzalez (2002:2) maintains that when parents are more involved in their children’s schooling (helping with the student's homework, attending school programmes, watching the student in sports or other extracurricular activities, helping the students to select the courses, and remaining informed of the student’s progress in school) the children perform better academically and are more engaged in school. They expend more effort, concentrate more and pay more attention to subject areas such as
Mathematics, English, Social skills and Science. She concludes that parental involvement is even more likely to be beneficial to students’ school success when it occurs within an authoritative parenting style (typified by acceptance, warmth, and behavioural supervision that allow some degree of democracy and autonomy on the part of the child).

2.3.3 Parental involvement and the locus of control

Locus of control refers to where students assign the causes of events: internally (to factors within themselves such as effort and ability) or externally (to factors outside themselves such as luck or teacher favouritism). Gonzalez (2002:2) postulates that parental control with involvement is related to internal locus of control, whereas control without involvement is related to external locus of control. Parental involvement has the strongest locus of control, especially when adolescents perceive more parental control. Parental support is beneficial in that it helps to offer a sense of security and comfort in a rather unpredictable society as the adolescent strives for self-development and a sense of identity.

2.3.4 Parental involvement and the mastery and performance goal orientations

When students adopt mastery goals, they seek out challenges, persist in the face of difficulty, view errors as possibilities to learn and are more likely to be intrinsically motivated. In contrast, the adoption of performance goals tends to lead to avoidance of challenging tasks, less intrinsic motivation, and the belief that errors are indicative of failure. Gonzalez (2002:2) avers that parental involvement is positively related to mastery orientation. When parents show an interest in the child’s education by being actively involved, students are more likely to seek more challenging tasks, persist through academic challenges and experience satisfaction in their school work.

2.3.5 Parental involvement and motivation

Students are motivated and encouraged when they see their parents taking an active interest in school (Gonzalez, 2002:2). Through their involvement, parents
communicate their commitment to the importance of a good education. Such parental support is beneficial in that it helps to offer a sense of security and comfort. This is especially vital to adolescents at risk of disengaging from school. In the context of a permissive parenting style and a lack of parental control, excessive peer influence may lead to improper social attitudes and behaviour, as well as to a host of negative outcomes, ranging from truancy to drug abuse, from depression to low grades, from poor attendance and disciplinary problems in school to dropout behaviour.

2.4 THE CHILDREN’S PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement theories do not always consider children as actors in the process of home-school relations. Children are seen rather as objects of concern that manifest the education outcome or product. They are conceptualized as either passive dependents of adults or as social actors exercising agency. They are therefore viewed as outcomes of social processes and not actors in them. Parents’ and teachers’ attitudes are presupposed to be crucial, while children are implicitly placed as the inert recipients of these. This is assuming a one-way relationship between parents, schools and children (Edwards, 2000:18).

In sharp contrast to the implicit or explicit model that portrays children as being passively socialized by social institutions like family and education, Edwards (2000:18) argues that children are social actors who can negotiate and participate in the construction of their daily lives in much the same way as adults. She conceptualizes children as beings in their own right rather than becoming beings who will one day mature. The implication of this postulation is that children do not have to rely on parents to speak about them or report on them on their (children’s) behalf. Edwards assumes that children are able to be reflexive agents in the home-school relations process, and that they can exercise agency.

Edwards (2000:7) introduces the notion of semi-involvement and argues that children “can shape, and work towards encouraging or discouraging, ensuring or preventing, their parents’ involvement in their education for their own reasons.” They can actively and strategically work towards, or passively respond to, both their parents’
involvement and uninvolvement at the same time, according to the site and/or aspect, or indeed be active towards parental involvement or un-involvement in some ways and passive in others. In this way, parental involvement and uninvolvement can shade into forms of semi-involvement, categories which are identified and discussed below (Edwards, 2000:7-11).

2.4.1 Category 1: Active in parental involvement

These are children who are active in parental involvement. In this category, children can speak of themselves as self-reflexively being in favour of home-school links, and as working towards their parents’ involvement. These children ask their parents for help with their homework or to provide extra educational work, initiating discussions about educational matters, seeking their advice, and spontaneously telling them about their school day. This shows that these children welcome their parents’ involvement, because they are their parents and should know about their school lives and as their children, they like their involvement. All this takes place within the home setting.

2.4.2 Category 2: Passive in parental involvement

These are children who are passive in parental involvement. These children portray themselves as being quite happy to just go along with, or let their parents or school get on with the process of involved home-school relations without much active and reflexive facilitatory or obstructory input from themselves. These children do not mind their parents prompting them to do their homework or offering to help with it, buying them educational materials, giving them advice on schooling matters and visiting the school to talk formally or informally to teachers. They respond when their parents ask them about school. They co-operate in passing on information to their parents from the school, show their parents their homework diaries when asked to do so by teachers or parents, and/or let their parents check their school bag for any letters from the school.
2.4.3 Category 3: Active in parental uninvolve

These are children who are active in parental uninvolvement. These children discourage, evade and obstruct their parents’ involvement as they can in its promotion. They work at rebuffing any attempts at parental involvement on the part of both parents and school. They prefer to keep their school life separate from their home life and parents and to have privacy boundaries. Within this category, there are children who see themselves as autonomous people who are capable of making their own decisions, taking responsibility for regulating their own homework and generally managing school matters themselves, and who do not need their parents’ involvement. There are also those who actively block and evade their parents’ involvement in their education. This in no way suggests that they are alienated from their parents, but may avoid stressing their parents.

They limit their parents’ knowledge about their schooling, especially through school communication with parents via letters, which are not passed on unless they are considered important by the children. They generally avoid telling their parents about the school and their school day. Having parents come on school outings, help in the classroom, come up to school to talk to the teacher, or become school governors also breaches the separation of worlds that they work towards. Certain types of parental involvement in the school setting could also be seen as acutely embarrassing or constraining. They exert control over their parents’ involvement through deciding what aspects of their schooling to tell them about and what to withhold. Some learners in this category may encourage their parents’ involvement in the school setting under specific circumstances like warning them first that this would occur. The line of parental involvement and uninvolve becomes fuzzy, to produce various forms of semi-involvement. This semi-involvement on the part of their parents may be shaped by the children’s own decision, or in forms of passive activity or active passivity, it might be their enabling or facilitatory response to stated parental desires to be involved or uninvolved in particular ways.
2.4.4 Category 4: Passive in parental uninvolvement

In this category are children who are passive in parental uninvolvement. In this category, parents are prevented from being involved. The most common reasons are that they are not the type to get involved for various reasons. Some cannot be involved especially with homework because they do not understand the process of schooling or the work itself. Some do not understand the language of instruction and thus find any form of involvement difficult. This makes parents more distant from school. The separation between their school and home lives suit children or they accept it without question.

2.4.5 Patterns of parental involvement

Edwards and Alldred (2000:11) further associate the categories identified above with identifiable patterns of parental involvement. According to them:

- Mothers are more involved in education than fathers.
- Resources available to different social groups of parents determine the extent of parental involvement.
- Girls are more actively involved or supporting parental involvement in education than boys.
- Middle-class children are more likely to take a stance of active passivity in portraying themselves as happy to go along with. Those at secondary school could also take an active role in discouraging their parents’ involvement, and keeping home and school separate.
- Primary school children are more involved than secondary children who take an active role in discouraging their parents’ involvement and keeping home and school separate. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2000:3) concur and add that younger children appear to elicit more involvement than older ones.
- Parental involvement in the school setting is something that children regard themselves as growing out of and the young people in secondary schools speak of it as embarrassing and constraining.
Children in working class circumstances are far more likely to be active either in initiating their parental involvement (mainly girls) or in blocking their involvement. They seem to be more active in shaping, and taking and being given more control over their parents’ involvement in their education. Their parents’ own powerlessness include an inability to become involved because they feel uncomfortable, do not know enough and/or cannot communicate in the language of instruction.

The above classification indicates a relationship between parental involvement and gender, social class, ethnicity and age. It is evident from Edward and Alldred’s (2000:11) observation that either way, the impetus for parental involvement or semi-involvement largely lies with parents themselves. Children are subject to what they regard as acceptable.

2.5 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Studies cited in the foregoing paragraphs show that parental involvement in South Africa is imperative if the culture of teaching and learning is to improve. Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:113) however cautions that it would be futile to effect parental involvement without first considering the historical development of parental involvement and effective communication with parents and the broader community before a plan of action can be devised.

2.5.1 From informal to formal education

Previously in South Africa, as in other nations like Ancient Israel, Athenian and Roman education, children were taught at home by mothers, fathers and the extended family members. They were taught according to the needs of the societies and the families. When black children reached a certain age, boys were sent to circumcision schools and the girls to intonjane where specific education concerning particular matters was taught by specialized people (Verster et al., 1982:25-32). Keto (1990:25) adds that education in South Africa started long before the arrival of the Dutch colonists in the middle of the seventeenth century. Traditional African
Societies educated their young as all societies do. The implication here is that parental involvement in education was not the inspiration of the 21st century.

However, with the arrival of the Europeans, Ndlazi (1999:4) notes that education shifted from the families to formal schools. Education was no longer based on indigenous social structures and conducted at home. The skills taught at home no longer sufficed since the economy was changing. As a result, education offered at home found no continuity at school. The need to accommodate the changing economy necessitated that children left home and received an education in formalized institutions to prepare them to participate in the economy. The schools took over the responsibility of teaching children. The result was the alienation of parents from what was happening at schools. Parents became less and less involved in the education of their children. When the children left home for school, black parents had no say or control over the curriculum, who taught them, and in decision-making processes that determined the educational policies that affected their children. Someone other than the parent decided what was considered the best educational system, supported that system, created a curriculum and courses to be taught and selected teachers to transmit the appropriate skills, information and values to young people during their early years. In contrast, Van Schalkwyk (in Kruger, 1996:33) argues that formal education on its own cannot fully satisfy the demands of the 21st century. Parents must assist and support formal education in the interests of more comprehensive education.

At the same time, some factors made it nearly impossible for parents to be involved in the school’s activities, because of factors that affected them directly. These factors are discussed in the following paragraphs:

Ndlazi (1999:6) notes that while the separation became the norm for parent sidelining in education, other factors assisted the system in the home front. The 1913 and 1936 Land Acts confined black people and their animals to homelands or reserves which could not accommodate a large number of people. However, some Blacks left the reserves to start a new life in the urban areas and were consequently introduced to the capitalist system although most were labourers. The education provided to blacks inculcated a mindset in preparation for their future servitude. Furthermore
Lipton (1985:24) and Molteno (1984:66) articulated Dr Verwoerd’s (who was then Prime Minister of South Africa) views that education for black people was offered as a means of communication between them and the colonists. Blacks had to understand the language of their masters.

As a consequence of the above-mentioned policies, husbands left their families in the rural areas and went to work in the urban areas. Section 10 of the Group Areas Act made it difficult to take their wives and children along. A culture of leaving children in rural areas with the extended family was created. The extended family had little control over these children, especially with regard to school matters which were postponed until the parents returned from work in the urban areas. For example, the schools had to wait for money from the parents in White South Africa to pay school fees (Ndlazi, 1999:6).

Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:114) concurs and adds that participation by black parents was not very good because they (parents) did not live near the schools. Because of apartheid legislation, adults could not stay near their work, which was in the predominantly white areas, and therefore they had to travel long distances. Often they had to leave their children with grandparents and stay nearer to the cities and their work. Lack of effective transport and communication also contributed to the low level of parental involvement in school activities. The low standard of apartheid education, together with the fact that the schools were perceived as apartheid structures, made the parents negative about participating in school’s activities.

2.5.2 Separation of communities

The historical separation of communities in South Africa cannot be ignored when discussing parental involvement in education. Before 1994 there were differences in the standards of schools for black and white learners. More money was spent on white education with the result that black learners did not have the same opportunities and equipment that white learners did. Christie (1991:108) spells out these differences in spending per capita in the 1988-1989 financial year as follows:
Ndlozi (1999:15) notes that the history of parental involvement closely followed that of educational provision for black South Africans, which was guided by a policy of separate but equal facilities. Politically, blacks were not part and parcel of the decisions taken about them including the education of their children.

2.5.3 Student unrest in the 1960s

A contributory factor to parental non-involvement in education was the major role that learners played in the late 1960s. They were instigators and leaders in the fight for the change of both political and academic institutions. The result was that there was lack of teaching and learning in black schools. The fight for freedom was more important to them than education. The slogan of the day was “Freedom now, education later...”. It is during this time that the education crisis committee organized parent-teacher-student associations, which took over governance of black schools. Parents were not satisfied with the education situation, but because of the power wielded by learners, they were not able to do much to restore effective education. Ndlozi (1999:15) notes that in traditionally black schools, some parents felt, among other reasons, that their inclusion and participation in school governance and management would give them the opportunity to root out students who were perceived as protest leaders set to destroy the learning efforts of other pupils who genuinely wanted to learn. She further notes that when parents were sent to the government with an educational request, most of the time the latter’s response was positive.

By contrast, in white schools there were structures to enable the parents to become involved. There was little disturbance and education continued with the involvement of parents. The success of structures like parent-teacher committees, which organized parent activities, depended on the positive and active organization of a teacher or parent in a school. In 1992, some of the schools changed to Model C
schools. The government subsidized these schools by at least 80% and the rest came from the parents (Dekker & Van Schalkwyk, 1990:305). Because of this financial partnership, parents were to play a major role in deciding the values and cultural norms that should be inculcated in the school. They had greater autonomy in the development of the admission policy and were to control and manage the appointment of teachers, curriculum and the utilization of building and financial policy. These schools had governing bodies and could make decisions on all aspects of the school. This increased participation in school activities.

Mavhiva (1996:68) argues that although parents were traditionally involved in the education of their children, according to their local needs and norms, the traditional westernized school system was not part of their frame of reference. Today it is these historically disadvantaged schools that encounter problems motivating parents to become involved.

Some historical studies demonstrate that knowledge about parental involvement was obtained mostly from studies conducted amongst the middle class and well-educated people in the United States of America. The emphasis shifted later to include the lower classes. By implication, parental involvement was perceived as a prerogative of the middle class and well-educated people. South African researchers followed the same trend (Ndlazi, 1999:15). Another observation Ndlazi makes is that much collected wisdom turned out not to be based upon direct evidence obtained from parents themselves, but upon teacher assessments of parental interests and involvement.

Another historical fact is that the most commonly used methodology by researchers to gather knowledge about parental involvement was more based on natural sciences, yet the world of parents belongs to the field of social or human sciences and is investigated by natural scientists.
2.6 BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The foregoing discussion has highlighted the need and importance of parental involvement in the education of their children. However, research has shown that there are barriers to the envisaged involvement.

Wheeler and Ramirez as cited in Ramirez (2001:115) demonstrate that oftentimes barriers to parental involvement stem from the teachers themselves. These barriers manifest themselves in the form of stereotypes that teachers may have concerning lower SES parents, single parent families and at-risk families. In a study conducted by Ramirez (2001:115), teachers were found to be apprehensive to the idea of involving parents in activities other than volunteering for school functions or at-home activities. They felt that involving them in curriculum matters, for example, was harmful. According to this study, many teachers felt that parents were not professionally able to be on curriculum or school related committees. This was contrary to the belief of administrators and parents. Many of the teachers felt that the parents needed to remain at home and work on raising their children. It is apparent that teachers in this study were concerned about parents behaving as parents and not be involved in matters that concerned the school if it did not deal with fundraising.

In the same study, Ramirez (2001:117) found that many of the parents felt that if they argued with a teacher or administrator, their child might suffer repercussions by way of lowered grades, exclusion in extracurricular events, chastisement, or other negative circumstances. Parents felt that the administrators protect the teachers and the district protects the administrators. The best option was not to communicate at all.

Another sentiment echoed by parents in the study that Ramirez (2001:120) conducted is that they felt caught in a Catch-22 situation where they were being portrayed as “nosey” or a “problem” if they were actively involved and “not caring” if they were not involved. Teachers who labeled parents as “radical right” if they participated and “not caring” if they did not attend functions, confirmed this as an accurate observation. In the light of these discussions, this study investigated whether there are barriers to parental involvement, what causes them and what can
be done to overcome them. It also investigated whether teachers involve parents, not only in the governance of schools, but also in matters pertaining to curricular and other school related matters.

Blankstein (2004: 168) observes that relations between school, family and community can often be minimal or even rocky - rife with understandings, misinterpretations and disagreements. He argues that few educators feel that parents have a genuine interest in being involved in their children’s schooling and teachers everywhere complain that parents send children to school late or sporadically, sometimes unfed, unrested, and unprepared for their classes. Parents on the other hand, frequently feel that school officials have no grasp of the problems they face and the difficulty of providing support for their children’s attendance and continuing progress. Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:120) postulates that there are indications that teachers do not want parents to be involved in school activities, but would prefer them to play a more informal role in the partnership. In particular teachers do not want parents to get involved in academic or classroom activities.

Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:259) add that some educators have the rather odd belief that parents and other members of the community are infringing on their professional terrain in becoming involved in school activities. Principals who believe this usually resist all attempts to involve the community.

Blankstein (2004:184) observes that involving parents in the school has its own challenges, which he identifies as:

- Either parents are seen not to be caring or are downright hostile. Those who care are perceived to be so overly involved that they second-guess the teacher’s every move.
- Teachers’ misconception that parent involvement means a one-way communication from the school to the children’s parents. Meaningful communication must be two-way, constantly alternating between informing parents and listening to them.
- Parents are enthusiastic about parent involvement, but they do not have a clue how to go about doing it.
• Teachers contend that although they appreciate having parents helping out, they should not tell them how to do their jobs. DeFour (in Blankstein, 2004:185) notes that there is a strong tendency to define parent-school relationships in very strict terms – that is, schools should make the decision and parents should support those decisions unquestioningly. This kind of partnership is less appealing to parents as well as less beneficial to the school.

Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:121) identifies the following factors that may inhibit effective parental involvement:

  o Teachers may be afraid that parents may challenge their authority and knowledge base in the class.
  o Parents may not have sufficient knowledge to be effective assistants in the classroom.
  o The situation will be unfamiliar to both teachers and parents, which may inhibit them.

Cotton (2001:7) notes that low-income parents are often under-represented among the ranks of parents involved with the schools. He cites the following reasons for this under-representation:

  o lack of time and energy due to long hours of heavy physical labour;
  o embarrassment or shyness about one’s own educational level or linguistic abilities;
  o lack of understanding or information about the structure of the school and accepted communication channels;
  o perceived lack of welcome by teachers and administrators;
  o assumptions of parents’ disinterest or inability to help with children’s schooling.

Hornby (2000:3-8) identifies the following barriers to parental involvement in education:
When both parents are working outside the home or there is only one parent in the home.

Where there is no history of societal expectation of parental involvement in schools or even in education of their children, educating the children is seen as the job of teachers and this is to occur in schools. Few parents know what schools expect from them or how they might contribute to their children’s schooling. This lack of knowledge acts as a barrier to the establishment of high levels of parental involvement.

In cases where children are schooled in places far removed from their local communities, for example at boarding schools, parents do not identify with the schools and this makes it difficult to ensure satisfactory levels of parental involvement.

The more autocratic the management structure of schools, the less likely they are to be able to sustain parental involvement which is based on partnerships between parents and teachers. Where collaboration is not the norm among staff at the school, it is unlikely that the collaboration between parents and teachers, which is necessary for effective parental involvement, will be possible.

Hornby (2000:8) suggests that in order for schools to effectively involve parents, they must have policies and well-established procedures for working with parents. The school policies should be influenced by national and provincial policies but also vary from school to school depending on the views of teachers and SGBs. Not having an overt and or covert policy on parental involvement becomes a barrier for involvement.

Increasing levels of parental involvement lead to increasing levels of teachers’ time. Since teachers are already stretched because of poor working conditions, lack of resources, or because of the disproportionate amount of time spent on paperwork (like Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) assessment and evaluation and Integrated Quality Management System), it is difficult to convince them that they need to contribute more time by setting up effective schemes of parental involvement. Additional financial and human resources need to be provided in order to facilitate high levels of parental involvement.
Almost 100% of teachers have had little or no training on working with parents on either initial training courses or as part of in-service training. Most teachers lack the skill and knowledge needed for effectively working with parents as shown by research findings in this study. This causes a barrier to parental involvement.

Most teachers have negative attitudes towards collaborating with parents as they consider this to be a source of stress in their jobs. They view parents as either being problems or adversaries. Teachers may have different goals and priorities to parents concerning the educational programmes of the children that they teach. This can create conflict and sometimes competition between parents and teachers. Competition can also be focused on children’s achievements.

Teachers, at times, view parents as vulnerable or in need of treatment themselves. This does not promote the development of good relationships. Teachers who come across as superior actually contribute to feelings of vulnerability in parents, which may lead to their becoming defensive and resistant to suggestions. They are sometimes seen as the cause of their children’s problems like anxiety, denial of reality or aggression. There is a tendency to view parents as less observant, less perceptive and less intelligent than the teachers. Their opinions and ideas are not given the credence they deserve. Such views are experienced by parents as patronizing, stressful and extremely frustrating. These labels do not help towards building relationships with parents. Teachers then adopt the attitude of professional distance which parents perceive as indicative of the lack of empathy and typically have little confidence in any teachers who operate at such a professional distance.

Ndizazi (1999:3) observed that contact between parents and teachers are based on negative events. Because of this negativity, parents withdraw completely from contact with the school, which leads to the indefinite postponement of major decisions, thereby making the management of a school difficult. When this happens, the principal tends to make undemocratic decisions questioned by the parents in question, which lead to conflict.

Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:259) postulate that educators whose background differs from that of the community might find that their efforts to involve the
community in school activities are rejected. Educators from other areas may well be respected, but are likely to be regarded as outsiders. Those from cities could find that rural communities mistrust them and resist their efforts to involve the community.

2.6.1 HIV/AIDS as a barrier to parental involvement in education

According to Caldwell (as cited in Wood, 2008:4), 86% of the 22 million people in the world live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has crippled Africa and South Africa has the highest infection rate per day in the world. One thousand six hundred new cases are reported daily with an estimated 258 000 being school learners. The impact on families and households is disastrous as it mainly affects adults of working age who have dependants. It confronts the already vulnerable with the demands of caring for the seriously ill and with the trauma of death. The result is the considerable change, which results in extremely large and extended (and even over-loaded) families, single parent families and children that are left behind in the care of other children or the elderly. Keeping orphaned children in school then becomes critical. School enrolment declines and the rate of the school population becomes lower. The impact is worsened when the family members are isolated or even ostracized due to the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. Families that are affected become victims of prejudice in the neighbourhoods, at school, at work and in the community. The number of orphaned children increases. Age distributions change in households where children take care of the siblings, peers and the elderly.

Van Rooyen and Hartell (in Calitz et al., 2002:146-147) note that principals and teachers need to:

- Accept that in the absence of parental guidance because some parents are dead already, parental guidance and sexuality education is part of the responsibility of the school.
- Acknowledge that learners, irrespective of age, are at risk even more so if they lack factual knowledge and information, the necessary life skills and values and norms based on founded moral principles.
Accept that a large proportion of the 5-14 age groups attending primary school is already sexually active (African Development Forum, 2000).

There are 290 000 HIV-positive learners older than 18 years in the system.

The number of learners with AIDS is increasing.

The number of deaths of learners (or family members of learners) is increasing.

Be aware that dangerous and even deadly cultural myths and misconceptions are prevalent, like so-called instant measures to curb HIV infection and magical remedies to save the infected or fatally ill.

Accept that the highest infection rate occurs in the 15-25 age groups, females in particular.

2.6.2 Getting parents involved in school

Levels of parental involvement will differ from school to school as each school has its unique needs and functions under unique circumstances. The most important factor is that parental involvement must be linked to more effective teaching and learning in the school.

Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:122-124) identifies the following pointers to parental involvement in education:

- The school should initiate the process with the principal acting as a catalyst. It is important that both staff and parents know and appreciate the rationale for their partnership. They should know what they want to achieve. They should then draw up the mission and the vision of the school jointly. It should be realized that this involvement is not a once-off situation but a continuous process which never stops.

- The staff members of the school must commit themselves to getting involved in the process. This can only benefit everybody as it gives them extra time to attend to other important matters.

- A good place to start the partnership is by building a good relationship. Social activities may help the partners to get to know each other, making it
easier to handle more difficult matters such as school finance and academic achievement of the school.

- Effective communication systems must be created between schools, parents and the broader community. In previously disadvantaged areas it may be more difficult because there may not be electricity for duplication facilities or there may not be adequate telephones while some parents may be semi- or illiterate. Without effective communication there may be no partnership and school development may be more difficult. Some forms of communication that work in these areas should be exploited e.g. announcements at the community gatherings, at church, at weddings - wherever people meet. At meetings not only negative issues but also positive issues should be addressed.

- It would help if enthusiastic parents and community members were used as leaders of the involvement programme and process.

- Structures could be created to encourage parental involvement. The structures can be based on interest or expertise.

- Create opportunities and reasons for the parents to come to the school. Social activities may include sport and other extra-curricular activities. Academic meetings may include parent evenings or subject-related meetings. If meetings focus on asking parents to contribute money to the school or work at the school, they may be hesitant to attend.

- Educational leaders could make the parents feel welcome by incorporating their ideas into school activities, making them chairpersons of committees, asking them to assist with specific tasks, and giving them the opportunity to initiate projects at the school.

- Educational leaders need to have a positive attitude towards the partnership and if necessary, to change their own attitudes to be able to accept parents as partners.

Van Rooyen and Hartell (in Calitz et al., 2002:159) report from research that parents overwhelmingly need guidance particularly with regard to sensitive issues such as sexuality education. They see a need for parental guidance programmes that can systematically impart knowledge, develop skills and insight. They observe that it is
the responsibility of every learner, educator or parent to avoid any behaviour which may create a risk of HIV/AIDS infection/transmission.

Some parents may not want to be involved due to illiteracy, visual or hearing impairment, as highlighted by this study. Some families may be isolated in rural areas and may not have the necessary resources at their disposal. These parents should be capacitated by the school as they could be invited to special meetings for their personal development. All this should be based on respect and consideration. To facilitate the process, meetings could be held at times suitable to parents. Schools would have to make the programmes so interesting and attractive that parents would want to attend. The information disseminated at the meetings would need to be adapted to the literacy levels of parents.

Van Rooyen and Hartell (in Calitz et al., 2002:163-163) suggest that flexible and creative ways of providing meaningful and relevant education services to communities and learners should take into account flexible times, places and techniques for learning and teaching. They suggest rendering the schools more non-formal in nature. This implies an ability to adapt usually uniform, standard aspects of the school system to a great variety of contexts and needs. Shaeffer (2000) in Calitz et al., (2002:163) suggests adjusting the school calendar and timetable to the particular needs of local families affected by HIV/AIDS. Learners may have to take time off in order to care for ill relatives, to attend funerals or to assist their families in economic activities. He also suggests meeting learners in their respective areas by providing education to those who are ill and cannot attend school.

2.7 PRINCIPLES TO BUILDING POSITIVE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

It is the responsibility of the educational managers as well as the teachers to initiate the participation and involvement of parents in school activities as active involvement will not happen by itself, by accident, naturally or easily or even by invitation. It demands hard work and initiative, planning and leadership skills from the educational leaders to achieve the goal of effective parental involvement. It has to happen by explicit strategic intervention and be purposely cultivated by, for example, bringing
parents and other adults together to share their expertise and talents in meaningful ways and by creating parent-to-parent support networks (Blankstein, 2004:167). Heystek (in Calitz et al., 2002:120) adds that parent involvement will not happen automatically, just because there is propaganda for involvement.

Parents are given greater responsibility under current educational legislation (SASA), but are not given greater resources or support to exercise those responsibilities. School leaders who genuinely value learning communities have to identify ways to include and support the parents of every child in their school. Blankstein (2004:169-174) identifies principles towards building relationships with families and communities. The principles will be discussed below.

2.7.1 Mutual understanding and empathy

The first step towards building home school relationships is to gain common understanding with empathy for students’ families. This means that staff must be aware of specific conditions that affect many families and make it difficult for them to support their children’s learning. This includes recognizing that many parents have had negative experiences with schools and are afraid to become involved. They may be intimidated by feelings of ignorance and uncertainty. Blankstein (2004:171) suggests that schools can extend understanding and support in the following ways:

- Replacing punitive processes with ones that seek to understand and improve a child’s situation.
- Creating schedules, policies, and programs that take into account students' home life challenges.
- Speaking in a language that parents understand and making announcements and communications in the language of the families.
- Arranging for transportation of students to after-school activities, and for families to school events.
- Working with local agencies (e.g. public libraries and public housing authorities) to provide quiet areas for homework and tutoring.
2.7.2 Make parents feel welcome

The best way to ensure parental and community involvement in a school is to welcome people into the school. Eason-Watkin (in Blankstein, 2004:172) states that in many conversations she had with parents and members of the community, they felt that most schools did not want them to participate, nor to be part of the school. The feeling of being unwanted and shut out sometimes stems from parents’ own experiences in the school. Those parents who struggled in their own academic careers may feel resentment, distaste, or even anxiety about interacting with school authorities.

Language and culture may create a barrier to parental involvement in schools. In many cultures, educators are imbued with an authority and status that makes families unwilling to ask questions or voice complaints. To solve this problem, schools could:

- establish a parent-to-parent outreach that contacts all parents to see what they can contribute to student learning;
- invite parents and community members in to provide lessons in the language and/or culture of ethnic groups that are represented in the school community;
- invite parents and community members in to provide leadership for extra-curricular clubs based on special interests;
- encourage parents or community members to make presentations/talks relevant to current events or subjects being studied. (Nurses and doctors can talk about health issues and life orientation, and police and para-medical services about safety).

2.7.3 Involving parents in the curriculum

Blankstein (2004:174) suggests that parents should be informed about what their children are learning, even to the point of offering parent workshops in which parents can themselves learn about the subjects their children are studying. He suggests
sending homework to parents at the beginning of every quarter so that parents can track what their children are learning each week. This enhances parents’ personal and professional lives. Some of these can be taught by parent volunteers. Further suggestions include that parents can (Blankstein, 2004:174):

- mentor and/or tutor students who need extra help;
- assist with classroom writing projects, science experiments;
- direct or assist with dramatic productions;
- present performances of puppet shows, musicals, drama, or dramatic readings.

2.7.4 Involving parents as support system for the school

Parents can answer the phone, make copies and help in the classroom. They can attend field trips and help in the cafeteria. Inviting parents into the school can inspire a cultural change for teachers. Teachers are often accustomed to teaching in isolation and may be uncomfortable or wary with other adults in their classroom (Blankstein, 2004:175).

2.7.5 Community outreach

Blankstein (2004:176) suggests that teachers can make themselves visible in the neighbourhood places which students and families are likely to visit e.g. at funerals, kitchen teas, circumcision parties, and so on. Wherever the parents are met - at the gym, at church, at the barbershop, anywhere and everywhere should become a campaign to get them to school. This should be seen as a constant, outgoing process that encompasses every interaction with every parent, and providing information about school activities and efforts to the community. Instead of inviting parents to the school, information meetings could be held at local churches and public meeting places. The local venues are perceived to be less threatening and convenient.

A principal of a school (cited in Blankstein, 2004:176) holds dances at which each “learner’s price of admission” is simply to bring a parent. Another principal (cited in
Blankstein, 2004:177) operates on the premise that “if you feed them, they will come”. So a meal or snacks would ensure that parents come to the school. Blankstein (2004:177) suggests creating and maintaining close ties with the local business community - as these have a considerable stake in the quality of graduates that the schools produce. He observes that they are often quite willing to contribute time, expertise, guidance and funding.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter examined how different authors define parental involvement. It also discussed the rationale for parental involvement. Usually, when the subject of parental involvement is discussed, it is discussed with the one-sided perception that parents lay down all the rules for their involvement in school while children are only recipients of those decisions. However, in this chapter, the perspective of how the children perceive and influence the involvement of their parents in school was discussed. It is realized that historical factors cannot be divorced from the status quo as regards parental involvement in South Africa. This chapter also discussed historical factors that promote or hinder parental involvement in school. It is assumed that some parents want to be involved in the education of their children but factors beyond their control may militate against their involvement. This chapter also looked at the factors that form barriers to meaningful parental involvement. Finally, literature was reviewed which lays down principles that could be adopted to build family and community relationships.

The next chapter discusses the research methods that were used to collect data.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Education is social in nature because it deals with people who think, feel and interpret phenomena as they occur in social settings. People base their interpretations on their frames of reference, not in isolation. In choosing an appropriate research method to investigate the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children, I took into consideration that parents and children have feelings for one another. Parents love their children, and want nothing but the best for them; they are responsible for their children’s education and want them to achieve in school. They are accountable for what eventually happens to their children after the phenomenon of formal education is over. Parental involvement in school can therefore be a sensitive issue, because it goes beyond the present to a future that has to be moulded by a school and teachers. For that reason, qualitative research methods were chosen as the most suitable methods to investigate black parental involvement in education.

3.1.1 Rationale for a qualitative approach

Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1993:99) aver that a qualitative research method is a systematic, empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a bounded social context. It is a means for describing and attempting to understand the observed regularities in what people do, say and report as their experience. Furthermore, in qualitative research, the focus of attention is on the perceptions and experiences of the participants. What individuals say they believe, the feelings they express, and explanations they give are treated as significant realities (ibid). In this study, the perceptions of parents, teachers, principals, chairpersons of the SGBs of schools and learners, were investigated. It was investigated:

- from parents how they perceive the extent of their involvement in the education of their children;
from learners how they perceive the extent of involvement (or non-involvement) of their parents in their education;
from principals and teachers how they perceive the involvement (or non-involvement) of parents in the school activities;
from the SGB chairpersons (as representatives of parents) how they perceive their involvement and the involvement of the entire parent body in the activities of their schools.

The qualitative researcher talks with people about their experiences and perceptions. This kind of research is descriptive in that text (recorded words rather than numbers) is the most common form of data. Interview transcripts, field notes from direct observation, diaries and documents are primary forms of information (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 1993:99). As the study progressed field notes were taken from direct observations. What the participants said was not only captured on tape, but their reactions and expressions and body language were noted and recorded.

Most qualitative research is naturalistic in that the researcher enters the world of the participant as it exists and obtains data without any deliberate intervention designed to alter the setting (Locke et al., 1993:99). Detailed descriptions of context and what people say or do form the basis for inductive rather than deductive analysis, that is, theory is created to explain the data. Locke et al. (1993:100) suggest that the investigator may begin with some preliminary questions in mind, or may allow some foreshadowing of problems and relationships to direct the initial focus of attention. The growth and understanding begins with trying to figure out how the participants understand the setting. In this study, I began with the dictates of SASA which spell out that parents should be stakeholders in the education of their children and that the parent component be bigger than all the components together. This shows seriousness on the part of government to involve parents in school. Of importance was whether parents are aware of this requirement and if they are aware, how seriously they take it.

Stangor (1998:116) notes that one particular advantage of naturalistic research is that it has ecological validity. Ecological validity refers to the extent to which the
research is conducted in situations that are similar to the everyday life experiences of the participants. Stangor (1998:116) confirms the belief that:

*In naturalistic research the people whose behaviour is being measured are doing the things they do everyday, and in some cases they may not even know that their behaviour is being recorded. In these cases reactivity is minimized and the construct validity of the measures should be increased.*

Research was conducted in the natural environment of the participants. Principals, teachers and learners were interviewed in schools, and the SGB chairpersons were interviewed in the venues that they themselves chose. Some chose to be interviewed in their homes while others chose to be interviewed at their places of work during their lunch breaks.

Going into the field means having direct and personal contact with people under study in their own environments. Qualitative approaches emphasize the importance of getting close to the people and situations being studied in order to personally understand the realities and mutual acts of daily life. The researcher goes close to the people under study through physical proximity for a period of time as well as through development of closeness in the social sense of shared experience and confidentiality. Denzin and Lincoln in De Vos (2002:279) postulate that researchers observe both human activities and physical settings in which such activities take place.

### 3.1.2 Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research methods involve the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or observation. It is used in the exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context (Malterud, 2001:1-2).

The advantage of using qualitative methods is to permit the researcher to study selected issues in depth and detail without being constrained by pre-determined
categories of analysis as would be the case of, for example, questionnaires with pre-determined questions in a quantitative study. This contributes to depth, openness and detail of qualitative inquiry that typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This increases understanding of these cases and situations studied but reduce generalizability (generalizability is discussed below).

3.1.3 Defining qualitative research

In defining qualitative research, Hammersley (2000:2) stresses that it focuses on diverse orientations of people involved in social activities; the way in which they actively make sense of their surroundings and how this shapes what they do, the unintended and often unforeseen consequences of actions; and the resulting contingency of most courses of events. Hammersley (2000:2) suggests a framework for looking at the value of qualitative work by outlining its capacities, namely:

- appreciative capacity,
- designatory capacity,
- reflective capacity,
- immunological capacity.

Each of the capacities will be briefly described in the following paragraphs.

3.1.3.1 The appreciative function

The appreciative function of qualitative research is the ability to understand and represent points of view, which are often obscured or neglected. For example, it can display the rationality of teacher’s actions to governors, parents, policymakers and politicians generally. Furthermore, the notion of appreciation used here requires that people’s behaviour be understood as making sense within the context in which it occurs, where that context includes how they see themselves and their environment. Equally important, through adopting this approach, it can raise questions regarding the assumptions made by policymakers about the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of pupils and parents, those for whom they often claim to speak. The promulgation of
SASA with regard to parental involvement in school does not take into consideration the difference between schools that were previously disadvantaged and those that were previously advantaged; schools that are in the townships with their associated poverty and need, and those that are in the suburbs and the cities and their associated affluence. The appreciative function draws attention to such differences.

3.1.3.2 The designatory capacity

According to Hammersley (2000:3), the designatory capacity of qualitative research enables people to think consciously about what they have been only half aware of, to give them names by which to remember experiences that would otherwise vanish without trace, and in so doing, find the most illuminating language with which to describe people’s experiences and actions. This function in this study asks SGB chairpersons, for example, to give their perceptions of what their roles and functions entail and give the roles names that they can understand. These are issues they may not have interrogated. Similarly, principals and teachers may be aware of the roles and responsibilities of parents and parent governors as directed by SASA but may not have given much thought to how these affect their relationship and functioning in the school.

3.1.3.3 The reflective capacity

Hammersley (2000:4) describes the reflective capacity of qualitative inquiry research as a mirror where principals, the SGBs, teachers and parents examine themselves to turn their attention to what actually goes on in schools (and at home) rather than to be so singularly preoccupied with what ought to go on in them. It helps them see themselves in a holistic perspective. This perspective also highlights problems that need to be tackled and it may show that problems have a different character from what is generally assumed.

3.1.3.4 The immunological capacity

The immunological capacity argues that the reason for failure of many reforms is that we have so little knowledge about the nature of the everyday world of teachers,
pupils and schools (Hammersley, 2000:2). With the introduction of the SASA that requires parents to be involved in the education of their children, there are problems with many parents who hold the view that the schools and teachers do not need parents to also contribute to their children’s success and the education reform, as was the status quo in the past.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection viz in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observations and written documents. The data from interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge. The data observations consist of detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviour, actions and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience. Observation as a data collection technique is discussed below.

Two kinds of qualitative data collection were engaged in this study, namely, interviews and observation. However before they are discussed in detail, the sample and procedures that were followed to prepare for the field investigation are discussed hereunder.

3.3 SAMPLE

The universe of this study was all the 124 black schools in Port Elizabeth where all the parents are black. All the schools are situated in the townships. However because it would be impossible to include everybody in the study, a sample had to be selected. According to Moles and Huberman (as cited in Punch, 2001:54), “All empirical research involves sampling as one cannot study everyone, everywhere, doing everything”. Sampling refers to the selection of people to participate in a research project, usually with the goal of being able to use these people to make inferences about a larger group of individuals (Stanger, 1998:100). Best and Kahn (2003:12) add that the primary purpose of research is to discover principles that have universal application, but to study a whole population to arrive at generalizations would be impracticable, if not impossible. As indicated earlier, in qualitative inquiry,
the size of the sample depends on what one wishes to establish and why one wants to find it out. It typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples selected purposefully. The logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research.

A sample of ten schools was purposely selected - five primary schools and five secondary schools. All the schools except for one are public schools. The tenth school is a private church primary school - the only black private school in Port Elizabeth. All the schools are in the black townships. In each school the principal, the teachers, the learners and the chairpersons of the SGBs were interviewed. A total of 40 interviews were conducted:

- 10 one-on-one interviews were conducted with the principals,
- 10 one-on-one interviews were conducted with the chairpersons of the SGBs,
- 10 focus group interviews were conducted with the teachers,
- 10 focus group interviews were conducted with the learners.

Port Elizabeth has seven major townships namely KwaMagxaki, Walmer, New Brighton, Zwide, KwaZakhele, Motherwell, KwaDwesi and Veeplaas. All these townships, without exception, are surrounded and in some cases swamped by informal settlements. In order for the sample to be representative, a sample was selected from five of these townships. It was earlier established that the two townships from which no participants were selected had a large number of children schooling in the other townships. For example, a number of learners from KwaDwesi were schooling in KwaMagxaki. A large number of learners from Motherwell were scattered in schools in the other townships. This was confirmed by teachers of the schools in the five selected townships. Two schools, one primary school and one secondary school, were selected randomly from each of the five townships. A total of ten schools formed the sample for this study. The process of random selection is discussed below.
3.4 PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD INVESTIGATION

I obtained written permission from the district office of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoe) in Port Elizabeth to conduct interviews in schools in the district. Permission was granted (see Appendices 1 and 2). I then obtained lists of names of all the schools in the district, both primary and secondary. The EDO then assisted with the identification of black schools, in which townships they were situated, and what type of schools they were. Schools belonging to the same township were marked with the same colour code on the lists. The lists were then cut up and names of schools belonging to the same townships (same colour code) were folded and put into a box. Primary and secondary schools were placed into separate boxes. I then randomly picked one name from each box. One primary school and one secondary school were selected in this way per township. The schools were then given pseudonyms. I then obtained permission from the principals of selected schools to conduct interviews in their schools. All the principals that were approached granted permission and signed the consent forms (Appendix 3). The consent forms were written in both English and IsiXhosa to accommodate all the participants. I further asked for contact numbers of the chairpersons of the SGBs of the schools and obtained them. I asked the principals to introduce me to the chairpersons of the SGBs of their schools so that when I phoned them to secure an appointment, they would already know about me and the purpose of the visit.

The principals were also requested to make appointments on my behalf with the staff and learners. I requested the principals to select teachers such that the focus group would be composed of six teachers. Clarke (2000:77) postulates that there is no fixed size for a focus group interview, but the group must not be too large as this may inhibit some members from joining in the discussion. Each group in this study consisted of six members. Care was to be taken that the group was inclusive with equal representation of male and female teachers, young, middle age and old, post level 1, post level 2 and members of the School Management Team (SMT). For the learners’ focus group, I requested the principal to include learners from grades eight to twelve in the secondary schools, but to ensure that boys and girls were equally represented. For the primary schools, I requested the principal to include learners from grades five to seven. All the principals obliged.
Interviews were then conducted with all four groups of participants. The principals, teachers and learners were interviewed at their schools and all the chairpersons were given the choice where they wanted to be interviewed, either at their homes or at their places of work. The details of the interviews are discussed in the following four chapters on findings.

3.5 INTERVIEWS

Interviewing falls within the interpretive tradition or paradigm. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:127) note that interpretive researchers do not work with data, which they describe as bits of discrete information that can be extracted from their context. They typically work with material that is richly interrelated and would lose its meaning if broken into discrete bits. They want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting. Researchers working in this tradition assume that (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:123):

People’s subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously, that we can understand others’ experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us, and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task. Rather than translating the stuff of everyday experience into a language of variables and mathematical formulae, as we would do when following an explicitly positivist approach, the interpretive approach tries to harness and extend the power of ordinary language and expression, developed over thousands of years, to help us better understand the social world we live in.

Whereas in positivist research one can rely on tried and tested assessment instruments to collect data, and on proven statistical techniques to analyse the data, in interpretive research, it is the researcher who is the primary instrument for both collecting and analyzing the data. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:126) advise that in order for the researchers to do better interpretive research, they have to
develop skills of listening and interpreting. I heeded this advice and made a conscious effort to listen without interrupting the participants.

This study engaged in-depth, open-ended interviews with the principals, teachers, learners and the chairpersons of the SGBs of participating schools (interview questions are in Appendices 4, 5, 6, 7).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:127) maintain that interviewing gives the researcher the opportunity to get to know the people quite intimately, so as to really understand how they think and feel. The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind. I asked the participants open-ended questions with the objective of not putting things in their minds, but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. Interviews are conducted to find out from people those things that cannot be directly observed like feelings, thoughts and intentions. Also, it is not possible to observe behaviours that took place some time ago as well as how they organize their world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. People have to be asked questions, and their responses recorded. The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questions. Qualitative findings are longer, more detailed and variable in content. The open-ended responses permit one to understand the world as seen by the respondents.

In collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews, the researcher also records direct words of the interviews. Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents’ depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences and their basic perceptions. The purpose of interviewing is to allow the interviewer to enter into the interviewees’ perspective. It begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with the principals and chairpersons of participating schools. An adequate degree of privacy was ensured by asking the principals ahead of time to provide a quiet place for the interviews. The same was
requested of the chairpersons of the SGBs. All the interviews with principals took place in the principals’ offices. The researcher took care to provide extra blank cassette tapes as well as a set of fully charged batteries.

The interview process, including the setting, is discussed fully for each interview in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven on findings.

3.5.1 Focus group interviews

This study investigated the extent of parental involvement in the education of their children as envisaged by the SASA. Specifically, it examined how children perceive the extent of involvement (or uninvolvement) of their parents in their education. It sought answers to questions like ways in which parents involve themselves in school activities: If they are perceived not to be involved, what are the reasons for their non-involvement? To elicit responses to these questions, focus group interviews were conducted with groups of six learners in the participating schools as well as teachers of the same schools. The study sought to investigate teachers’ perceptions of evidence of the parents’ involvement in the children’s education. The interview sought to investigate how teachers feel about involving parents in school activities as well as challenges that teachers experience as a result of parents involving (or not involving) themselves in school activities.

Focus group interviews are interviews in which a number of people are interviewed at the same time and share ideas both with the interviewer and with each other (Stanger, 1998:98). According to Clarke (2000:77), in this type of interview, the investigator is primarily concerned with obtaining an insight into the attitudes and opinions of groups, rather than acquiring specific information from individuals. Powell and Single (in Clarke, 2000:77), define a focus group as a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experiences, the topic that is the subject of the research.
3.5.1.1 Advantages of focus group interviews

The focus group interview has many advantages over other types of research. Sarantakos (in Maraj, 2000:131) identifies the following:

- Data is obtained from a group more quickly than from the same number of individuals.
- Such interviews allow for clarification and lend themselves better to probing as well as clarification of responses. Non-verbal behaviour can also be observed and can contribute to the findings.
- Focus groups encourage the respondents to make their inputs in their own words. It further encourages respondents to build on the responses of other group members.

Neuman (2003:396) adds another advantage, which is that the natural setting allows people to express opinions and or ideas freely. Open expression among members of marginalized social groups is encouraged and people tend to feel empowered. In this study, black parents (through their SGBs) were afforded an opportunity to voice their concerns about their involvement in education. Teachers and the principals were afforded an opportunity in which to voice their perceptions and their own understanding of involving parents in school activities.

Clarke (2000:77) adds that focus groups generate a lot of qualitative data fairly quickly and they are relatively inexpensive to run. From a methodological point of view, focus groups allow participants the freedom to raise issues that are important to them rather than merely responding to a set of predetermined questions. Moreover, they provide the evaluator with an opportunity to directly observe the social process and dynamics of group interaction. Lastly, they also introduce an element of quality control into the data collection process. Patton (in Clarke, 2000:77) notes that participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other, which weeds false or extreme views. The participants were encouraged to respond in their own terms, while simultaneously ensuring that the focus of the group was maintained. The group setting allows participants to qualify their original responses in the light of comments made by other group members.
3.5.1.2 Disadvantages of focus group interviews

Clarke (2000:77) further identifies disadvantages of focus group interviews which need to be consciously addressed by the researcher in order that they do not affect the study negatively. The disadvantages include individuals who may suppress or modify their true feelings when in the presence of others, because there is not the same cloak of confidentiality as applies in the individual interviews. Clarke (2000:77) further notes that individuals may feel inhibited when in a group where participants not only know one another, but also have to work alongside each other. I made sure that the participants were made to feel confident by ensuring a relaxed atmosphere during interviews as well as assurances of confidentiality. These assurances set the tone for respondents not to feel inhibited in their responses.

3.5.2 Concluding the interviews

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:422) advise that an interpretive research has to come to a conclusion but not for wrong reasons like running out of time and resources. Rather it should draw to a conclusion when the account has reached a point of saturation. Saturation refers to the condition of an interpretive account where the account is richly fed by the material that has been collected at least to the point where the researcher can intuitively vouch to have explored the data and have acquired a satisfactory sense of what is going on. I heeded the suggestion made by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:423) that the researcher has done enough when:

- the kind of new thoughts s/he has about the material are not adding anything new to the understanding already developed;
- it seems that the interpretive account answers the questions that were set out to be answered and adequately represents the material that has been collected;
- a barrage of questions at the interpretation have been asked and it is still standing;
- new material and new questions seem to add to the account rather than break it down;
the researcher has shared his/her opinions with other researchers and or the supervisor, and the account has provided responses to their questions.

3.6 OBSERVATIONS

There are limitations to how much can be learned from what participants say. To understand fully the complexities of many situations, observation of the phenomenon of interest may be a good research method. Observation in the context of this study concerns the naturally occurring behaviour of people and events in the participating schools, for example, the principal and how s/he relates and communicates with the rest of the staff, the appearance of his/her office (which is where the interviews with the principals took place), the climate and ethos of the school, the state of the buildings, equipment and the school yard. I observed the appearance and dress code of the teachers and the learners, the way the learners behaved towards the stranger that I was, compared to how they behaved towards their teachers. These observations would give an indication of the extent to which parents would be received and welcomed to the school. In short, I observed the social setting under study as well as unwritten social rules in the school. I also noted non-verbal cues such as the style of speaking, speed at which people work, the response of the teachers and the learners to the ringing of the bell that signals changing periods.

I observed the non-verbal forms of communication like fidgeting, moving about or trying to sit comfortably; the way people were dressed, expressed themselves, physically spaced themselves during interviews, and whether or not they used hand signals amongst themselves. Non-verbal communication can indicate attention or boredom or concentration. The observer, therefore, becomes fully engaged in experiencing the setting under study while at the same time trying to understand that setting through personal experience, observations and talking with other participants about what is happening. These observations were jotted down as they were going to be useful in complementing interview data and in interpretation of the various situations.
The advice of Best and Kahn (2003:300) was heeded throughout the observation. They advise that the following standards of observation should characterize the observations:

- Observation is carefully planned, systematic, and perceptive. Observers know what they are looking for and what is relevant in a situation.
- Observers are objective. They recognize the likely biases, and they strive to eliminate their influence on what they see and report.
- Observers separate the facts from the interpretation of the respondents.
- Observations are checked and verified, whenever possible by repetition or by comparison with those of other competent observers.
- Observations are collected in such a way as to make sure that they are valid and reliable.

3.7 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND GENERALIZABILITY

3.7.1 Validity

Silverman (1995:149) cites Hammersley as stating that validity is the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. Silverman (1995:149) suggests that one way of establishing validity is taking one’s findings back to the subjects being studied to verify. This is called respondent validation. In this study, findings were taken back to the principals and one teacher of the participating ten schools for them to verify if what was captured was actually what they said. They all confirmed that data were captured accurately. The findings were also validated by reviewing literature on the subject.

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:46), validity can also be defined by the degree to which the researcher can produce observations that are believable for her or him, the subjects being studied, and the eventual readers of the study.

Validity of qualitative data can be external. External validity refers to the degree to which findings can be generalized to the population from which the participants were drawn. It also encompasses the degree to which the sample is representative of the
population from which it was drawn. This is called population validity (Best & Kahn, 2003:12). Best and Kahn (ibid) further define a population as any group of individuals who has one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:313) concur and add that external validity is when its findings can be generalized beyond the confines of the design and the study setting. This implies that the results of this study can be applied to all schools in South Africa, thereby fulfilling the requirement of having parents involving themselves in school.

Neuman (2003:185) simply defines validity as truthful. He, however, quickly adds that:

...qualitative researchers are more interested in authenticity than validity. Authenticity means giving a fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it everyday.

Truthfulness, fairness and honesty in this study were established through validation of data by the participants themselves. Triangulation of data sources (interviews and observation) and asking the same question to different sets of participants (the principals, learners, teachers and SGB chairpersons) and getting the same answer provided some validation.

3.7.2 Reliability

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:46) postulate that many qualitative researchers reject ‘reliable’ and ‘objective’ measures as invalid. They argue that:

...social phenomena are context-dependent, and that the meaning of whatever it is that the researcher is investigating depends on the particular situation an individual is in.

They suggest that rather than using a measurement scale as an instrument of observation, in qualitative research the researcher is the instrument of observation.
Best and Kahn (2003:285) aver that a test is reliable to the extent that it measures whatever it is measuring consistently. Silverman (1999:145) explains further and says that reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. Categories of the frequently occurring data have been identified in this study and are proof of reliability (see Chapter Eight). Neuman (2003:184) adds to his definition of reliability the issue of dependability. Dependability of data was established by capturing all the interviews on a tape recorder and transcribed in writing. During the transcription exercise, I decided to eliminate only those parts of the respondents’ story that were not commensurate with the research topic or had no significance to the research. Attempts were made to reproduce the interview scripts as accurately as possible. Following the transcription, I listened again to the tapes while reading the transcript. Furthermore, the interviews were unbiased and I took care not to ask leading questions or be over-impressionistic in observations.

3.7.3 Generalizability

Generalizability refers to the extent to which the results or findings of a study can be extrapolated to a wider context than that used in the implementation of research design. As alluded to earlier in this study, all the schools participating in the study are populated by black learners and all the schools are in the townships with characteristic poverty, and deprivation. By observing the characteristics of the sample one can make inferences about the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn. Furthermore the methodology used in the study was geared towards transferability of issues and interventions emerging in the schools to other schools of similar characteristics, thus providing the validity of generalization.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics define what is or is not legitimate to do, or what moral research procedure involves. Neuman (2003:116-118) postulates that the researcher has a moral and professional obligation to be ethical, even when research subjects are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics. Many ethical issues involve a balance between two values: the pursuit of scientific knowledge and the rights of these being studied or of
others in society. Potential benefits such as understanding of social life, improving decision making, or helping research participants must be weighed against potential costs such as a loss of dignity, self-esteem, privacy, or democratic freedoms.

Neuman (2003:124) further advises that informed consent to participate in the study must be sought from the participants. That informed consent must contain the following:

- A brief description of the purpose and procedure of the research,
- A statement of any risks or discomfort associated with participation;
- A guarantee of anonymity and the confidentiality of records;
- A statement that participation is completely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty;
- A statement of any benefits or compensation provided to subjects and the number of subjects involved;
- An offer to provide a summary of findings.

Neuman (2003:397) further notes that a researcher learns intimate knowledge that is given in confidence. S/he has a moral obligation to uphold the confidentiality of data. This includes keeping information confidential from others in the field and disguising members’ names in field notes. Pseudonyms were assigned to all the schools.

To fulfill these requirements, prior permission was obtained from the Education, Research, Technology and Innovation Committee (ERTIC) of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) after I had made an application for approval by the research ethics committee according to the committee’s standard protocol. When this approval was gained (Appendix 4), I approached the principals, teachers, and chairpersons of the SGBs of participating schools. They agreed to sign the consent forms (Appendix 3). The teachers noted that they were in loco parentis for their learners; so individual learner consent was not elicited. The information given on the consent form assured the participating schools and teachers that pseudonyms were to be used throughout the study to ensure the participants’ anonymity and privacy. I also assured the participants that if at any stage they wanted to withdraw from the
study, they had the freedom to do so. The participants were also made aware that they were not going to be compensated for participating in the study.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

After the data was collected through interviews and field notes, it was then analyzed. All fieldwork culminates in the analysis and interpretation of some set of data. Analysis involves breaking up the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. The aim of analysis is to understand the various constitute elements of one’s data (Mouton, 2002:108). Froggatt (2001:433) notes that qualitative data analysis is a complex, iterative process that entails working inferentially and systematically with the data to produce a final written account. Complexity comes from the assumption that reality is socially constructed and not an objective given. Ziebland and McPherson (2006:407) add that qualitative studies often explore participants’ different perspectives and understandings. For that reason the analysis reflects the diversity of experiences, not just those that are most frequent.

Jacelon and O’Dell (2005:217) define data analysis as the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data. They describe it as challenging, labour-intensive, and guided by few standardized rules. Basit (2003:143) concur and add that qualitative data analysis is difficult because it is not a mechanical or technical exercise. It is dynamic, intuitive, and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing. Jacelon and O’Dell (2005:217) further note that data analysis is based on research questions, and guided by the theoretical framework of the study.

Although Ziebland and McPherson (2006:405) admit that analysis is very time consuming, careful sampling, the collection of rich material and analytic depth mean that a relatively small number of cases can generate insights that apply well beyond the confines of the study. The universe of this study, as indicated earlier, is all the schools in Port Elizabeth. The carefully selected sample of ten schools generated insights that apply not only to schools in Port Elizabeth, but to all schools countrywide.
De Vos et al. (2005:333) add that the purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to produce findings by transforming data into findings. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal. They add that data analysis is also the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. Froggatt (2001:433) adds that the aim of qualitative research is to explore social processes and values in their particular social context, to lay open the individual’s experiences and inferred meanings. Froggatt adds taking collected data and working with it creates an authoritative written account.

According to Basit (2003:143), the object of data analysis is to determine categories, relationships and assumptions that inform the respondents’ view of the world in general, and off the topic in particular. Basit (2003:144) contends that the analysis of qualitative data continues throughout the research and is not a separate self-contained phase. The researcher comes to qualitative research with whatever understanding of analysis from the previous work, the conventions of different disciplines and professions, the advice of mentors and models that s/he has internalized from whatever s/he has read.

Thomas (2003:1) prefers the term ‘inductive approach’ for qualitative data analysis and identifies the purposes for using the approach as:

- to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief summary format;
- to establish clear links between research objectives and the summary findings derived from raw data,
- to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data.

The inductive approach reflects frequently reported patterns used in qualitative data analysis. According to Thomas (2003:1), this research approach allows research
findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes in raw data, without the restrictions imposed by structural methodologies.

3.9.1 Procedures for qualitative data analysis

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of data analysis. Analysis should begin at an early stage in data collection and be highly systematic. Ziebland and McPherson (2006:405) advise that it is important for the researcher to identify issues that emerge during the data collection and analysis as well as those that the researcher may have anticipated (from reading or experience).

There are strategies or procedures common among the various traditions in the qualitative research. Thomas (2003:4) prefers the following procedure to analyse qualitative data:

3.9.1.1 Preparation and organizing of data

The process begins with transcribing data from tape recordings and complementing them with field notes made of observations during the interviews. The observations can be of body language like a laugh or a smile or a frown or doubt, or discomfort on being asked some questions. Transcribing interviews or notes offers another point of transition between data collection and analysis, as part of data management and preparation. De Vos et al. (2005:336) note that in the process of transcribing, the process generates emergent insights. Ziebland and McPherson (2006:407) add that many researchers prefer to transcribe their own data because repeated listening to the tapes aids their familiarity with their data.

Transcription is followed by typing and organizing the data. Three copies of transcripts may be printed: one for colour coding, another for cutting and pasting and a third copy kept as a master copy.
3.9.1.2 Close reading of text

Once text has been prepared, the raw text is read in detail so that the researcher is familiar with the content and gains an understanding of the ‘themes’ and details in the text. Cresswell (in De Vos et al., 2005:337) advises the researcher to read the transcripts in their entirety several times, immersing him or herself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking them into parts. Marshall and Rossman (in De Vos et al., 2005:337) add that the researcher has to become familiar with the data in intimate ways. They believe that the more the researcher interacts with the data, the more patterns and categories begin to “jump up” and are noted in short phrases, ideas or key concepts. Thomas (2003:4) suggests close readings of the text with consideration of multiple meanings that are inherent in the text.

3.9.1.3 Creation of categories

The next step is generating categories, themes and patterns. De Vos (2005:337) sees this step as representing the heart of qualitative data analysis. It is in this step that a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to the data, and openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life is demanded. De Vos (2005:537) also adds that in order to generate categories, the researcher needs to note regularities in the setting or people chosen for study. The categories should be internally consistent but distinct from one another. Thomas (2003:4) describes the process as identifying text segments that contain meaning units, and creating a label for a new category into which the text segment is assigned.

Basit (2003:144) postulates that codes or categories are tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to chunks of varying-sized words, phrases sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. She views the role of coding as noticing relevant phenomena, collecting examples of those phenomena; and analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures. Creating categories triggers the construction of a conceptual scheme that suits the data. The scheme helps the researcher to ask
questions, to compare across data, to change or drop categories and to make a hierarchical order of them. In this study, categories were created and are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Thomas (2003:4) differentiates between upper level or more general and lower level or more specific categories. Upper level categories are likely to be derived from the research aims while the lower level categories will be derived from multiple readings of the raw data. Categories are created from meaning units or actual phrases used in specific text segments.

Strauss (in Basit, 2003:144) traces the origin of category names. He says they can come from the pool of concepts that researchers already are from their disciplinary and professional reading, or borrowed from the technical literature, or are the words and phrases used by informants themselves. Basit (2003:144) continues to say that coding and analysis are not synonymous, though coding is a crucial aspect of analysis.

3.9.1.4 Continuing revision and refinement of category system

Thomas (2003:4) advises the researcher to search for subtopics within each category, including contradictory points of view and new insights. In such a case, the researcher would select appropriate quotes that convey the core theme or essence of a category. He further advises that the categories may be linked under a superordinate category when the meanings are similar. The categories that have been identified in this study make up the essence of what the respondents conveyed.

Thomas (2003:5) postulates that the intended outcome of the process is to create three to eight summary categories (contrary to five to six advised by De Vos et al., 2005:338), which in the coder's view capture the key aspects of the themes in the raw data and which are assessed to be the most important themes given the research objectives. More than about eight major themes can be seen as incomplete in that some of the categories may need combining or the coder has not made the hard decisions about which themes or categories are most important. In this study eight categories were created. They are discussed in Chapter Eight.
The following table captures the procedure for analysis as follows:

**Table 3.1: The coding process in inductive qualitative analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial read through text data</th>
<th>Identify specific segments of information</th>
<th>Label the segments of information to create categories</th>
<th>Reduce overlap and redundancy among the categories</th>
<th>Create a model incorporating most important categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many pages of text</td>
<td>Many segments of text</td>
<td>30-40 categories</td>
<td>15-20 categories</td>
<td>3-8 categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: Adapted from Thomas, 2003:6)

As indicated earlier, there is no one way to work with the data. It is a process best learnt by doing. Froggatt, (2001:434) proposes the following procedure, which is not necessarily different from what Thomas proposes above and which will be described below.
Managing the data means preparing the data, so that it is ready to be analysed. Describing the data means coding the data. Digging deeper into the data means examining the data for different types of meaning. Presenting the data covers how the data will be displayed and visualized.

Tesch (in Basit, 2003:144) used the terms data condensation or data distillation as a description of the eventual outcome of a qualitative analysis, which is a result of interpretation and organization. She viewed the formation of categories both as an organizing tool and an important part of the outcome. She contends that the process of establishing categories is a very close, intense conversation between a researcher and that data has implications for ongoing method, descriptive reporting and theory building.

3.9.2 Pitfalls in qualitative data analysis

Froggatt (2001:435-436) warns qualitative researchers against pitfalls of data analysis, which he identifies as:
- inconsistency between methodology and methods;
- isolating data analysis from data collection and interpretation;
- presenting a descriptive account; and
- lack of information about processes undertaken.

Jacelon and O'Dell (2005:219) add the following pitfalls to data analysis:

- Premature closure where many researchers present only data or theme summaries without the benefit of insight and interpretation. The end product of premature closure lacks the richness of a well-developed qualitative research project and does not illuminate practice. Qualitative analysis requires that the researcher push beyond the obvious to explore hidden meanings.

- A tenacious commitment to a point of view with researchers who are unable to put aside their preconceived opinions of a topic under study are in danger of simply confirming their own beliefs.

- Researchers who follow directions, any directions for analyzing qualitative data. This does not yield a satisfactory product. The hallmark of good quality research is creative data analysis.

For this study, care was taken to avoid the pitfalls identified above.

The procedure used to analyze data in this study was a synthesis of the above procedures. Jacelon and O'Dell warn that the data analysis phase of a qualitative study is often prolonged and extends long after the data collection has been completed.
3.10 INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Interpretation means relating one’s results and findings to existing theoretical frameworks or models and showing whether these are supported or falsified by the new interpretation. It also means taking into account rival explanations or interpretations of one’s data and showing what levels of support the data provide for the preferred interpretation (Mouton, 2002:109). Jacelon and O’Dell (2005:219) note that the successful interpretation of the data depends on the researcher’s ability to creatively identify the findings.

Interpretation of data in this study was informed by a social science construct or idea that parents, irrespective of their status or socio-economic status, should be involved in the education of their children.

Ziebland and McPherson (2006:409) suggest ways in which qualitative analysis can be enriched. The most obvious is by going back to the literature to explore where the researcher’s insights fit in and how they can be further informed by the theoretical literature. Secondly, they suggest discussing data with colleagues from another disciplinary background so as to provide new insights and interpretations. Thirdly, they suggest respondent feedback. This does not necessarily mean that every participant should be required to comment on the analysis, but the main findings could be presented to another group with similar experiences to test whether findings ‘ring true’. All the above processes were engaged in.

3.10.1 Levels of qualitative data

Many issues contribute to the quality of the product of qualitative research. Kearney (in Jacelon & O’Dell, 2005:219) suggests five levels of qualitative findings. The first level is where data are analyzed according to an existing set of ideas or framework. There is little discovery of new ideas in this type of research, and the researcher often finds exactly what he or she was looking for. This type of data analysis rarely contributes to the evidence base for practice.
The second level of data analysis is descriptive qualitative research where the researcher develops a series of labeled data categories, which are subsequently identified, but the analysis does not include relationships among categories. This type of finding may be useful to generate a list of descriptions about a specific topic.

The third category of data analysis is aimed at developing a synthesis of an experience or processes. The researcher seeks to logically integrate the themes. The fourth category provides more complexity, depicting the variation of a phenomenon between people or across contexts. Finally, the highest level of sophistication of qualitative data analysis yields a product that is a rich evocation of a situated understanding of a multifaceted and varied human phenomenon in a unique situation. This level of data analysis is considered the gold standard of qualitative research, and requires analysis of data containing information on the breadth and depth of a phenomenon.

Qualitative inquiry is also analytic or interpretive in that the investigator must discern and then articulate often-subtle regularities within those data. For that reason, data reduction, organization, manipulation and display are central activities in the research process. When analyzing and interpreting data, regularities will be organized into categories or themes. In this study regularities were organized into categories, which are discussed in Chapter Eight.

3.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the rationale for the research methods that were engaged in this study, as well as tools that were used to collect data have been discussed. The sample was described and the sampling procedure explained. Steps that were followed in preparing for the field investigation were elucidated. The procedure to be followed when conducting interviews was explained. Validity and reliability of data collection as well as generalizability of findings were discussed. Ethical issues were considered. The method of data analysis and interpretation was described.

In Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven, findings emanating from the data will be presented, followed by the interpretation of data in chapter eight.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Data was collected through interviews to establish the extent of involvement of black parents in the education of their children. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the principals of ten schools and ten SGB chairpersons of the same schools. Ten focus group interviews were conducted with focus groups of teachers and ten of learners. In this chapter, findings from principals will be presented. Maraj (2000:128) believes that people are more willing to talk than to write. Writing could create the wrong impression that interviewees are being tested or being forced to commit themselves in writing. Not only is this tedious and time consuming, but it also reduces the respondents’ willingness to participate fully, especially when the person is not very literate or has a spelling or handwriting problem. He suggests that questioning can be brought down to the literacy level of the interviewees.

4.2 VALIDATING THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

After the interview questions were initially drawn up, they were given to seven principals of different races and cultures to validate them in terms of relevance and appropriateness; and also whether they were easy to understand. The composition of the principals was as follows:

• Two are black, one from a primary school and the other from a high school.
• Two are white, one from a primary school and the other from a high school.
• Two are coloured, one from a primary school and the other from a high school.
• One is an Indian principal of a high school.
• Three of the principals are female, while the other four are male.
The principals were specifically requested to check for ambiguity and to evaluate whether the questions could promote discussion. They were asked to add whatever questions they felt should have been included and were asked to freely make suggestions to eliminate whatever they felt was not necessary. Three draft interview questions were left with the principals for a week and I made an appointment to collect them thereafter.

When I went back to collect the draft interview questions, the principals discussed the suggested amendments with me. I deleted questions that were not necessary and added important and relevant questions that I had initially left out. I adjusted the interview questions according to the feedback received.

The rationale for validating the interview questions from many backgrounds was that parent involvement is not the monopoly of the black parent. It is a requirement for all school types. All principals across the cultural and racial divide have experienced working with parents. Furthermore the schools were purposely selected as schools that are functional in terms of learner performance and discipline.

4.3 INTERVIEWS WITH THE PRINCIPALS

As discussed earlier, interviews were conducted with principals of ten schools, five primary and five secondary schools. To ensure confidentiality, the schools were given pseudonyms, but were not made aware of the names. The names of the schools were:

- Shoulders High School
- Knowledge High school
- Revelation High School
- Kickoff High school
- Build It High School
- Shushu Primary School
- Woodbundle Primary school
- Charlie Pride Primary School
- Horseradish Primary School
4.3.1 Opening the interview

After the interviewee and myself were both seated, I thanked him/her for affording me the opportunity to interview him/her. I then explained the purpose of the interview and the value of the information that will be obtained from our interaction. I assured him/her of the strict confidentiality of the interview (an informed consent form had already been signed) and asked for permission to capture the interview on audiotape. All ten principals had no objection to my using the tape recorder. I then explained that they were free to respond either in English or IsiXhosa or code switch. The interview then commenced after this initial introduction.

4.4 INTERVIEW ONE: PRINCIPAL OF SHOULDERS HIGH SCHOOL

Shoulders High School is situated in an up market township where conditions are rural because a large majority of the learners in the school come from a huge informal settlement on the outskirts of this township. According to a description of one teacher the school is “an urban residential middle-class area”. Although the residents of the area are black professionals (teachers, nurses, lawyers, civil servants, community leaders, and uniformed forces), the majority of the 1 300 learners enrolled in the school come from the nearby informal settlement. One teacher commented that “90% of the learners in the school come from depressed parents”. The children of the area commute to the former Model C schools in and around the city.

The township was built in the apartheid days for the professional people who had means to live in the city but was not allowed by law. After the democratic elections of 1994, a number of black people moved to the city and surrounding suburbs.

The principal is a middle aged, university graduate with a BA degree and is well spoken. He lives in a posh suburb in town and commutes to the area. The interviews took place in his office, which is large and tastefully furnished and carpeted. To avoid the confrontational position, he insisted on sitting on the visitors’
chair next to mine. We both faced his desk. The atmosphere was cordial. It was quiet except for the phone, which rang twice but was ignored (the receptionist was not on duty).

After I assured him of the confidentiality of the interview, I asked for permission to capture the interview on tape - which was granted. I indicated that he was free to respond in either isiXhosa or English or both - whichever he was comfortable with. The responses were made in both.

4.4.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children?

In what areas are parents involved?

Response:
Other than the SGB, it is estimated that only about 40% of the parents ever involve themselves in school activities. It is doubtful if they are even aware that they should be involved. The principal admitted that the school shares the blame because parents are never informed in time of school activities like sport.

At this school there was an initiative to raise funds. A parents' committee was set up to oversee the project but the project did not materialize; in fact it never took off the ground because the parents never followed up. Parents are only forced to come to school when they have to collect their children’s progress reports and then they complain if their children fail.

The SGB only attend meetings, nothing else. Even in those meetings they don’t come up with any valuable contributions or innovations. They only respond to problems. It is understood that the SGB do not know what is expected of them. They have no training in the roles they are expected to play. Even if the DoE had embarked on a training programme, it would be difficult for working parents to attend because they would not have the time.
4.4.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.
Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
Some parents never show any interest at all. They do not even respond to the letters and notices inviting them to meetings. The majority of the parents do not receive the invitations sent to them with the learners. The learners claim that they forget to give their parents notices of meetings. The only way to get parents to attend the meetings is to put pressure on the learners by punishing them.

4.4.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution should come from parents in the form of school fees.
Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:
The estimated number of parents who meet their financial obligations without persuasion is about 20%. Another 40% pay only after they have been persuaded. The media and the DoE exacerbate the culture of non-payment of school fees by announcing that parents do not have to pay school fees. In the Section 21 schools, funding from government is insufficient to buy books for all the learners, let alone do any electrical repairs or buy furniture. There was just not enough of anything.

4.4.4 Question Four: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.
How do you communicate with the parents?
Response:
The school communicated by sending letters home with the learners.

4.4.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school.
What challenges do you experience at school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?

Response:

• Vandals rip off electrical installations. No teaching takes place when it is overcast because it is too dark in the classrooms. Learners are dismissed to go home. The copper pipes were removed by vandals and were replaced with plastic ones, which cannot carry the load and easily burst. The school is then faced with further repairs because the DoE does not help. Before my visit, the school had to pay a private person R4 500,00 out of school funds to repair an electrical installation that had gone faulty.

• Discipline is a challenge because there is no co-operation between home and school. The teachers cannot appeal to parents to assist with discipline problems.

• HIV/AIDS and drug abuse are on the increase. In school there are incidences of parents who are HIV positive and their children miss school to look after them.

• Pregnancy among girls is on the increase and poses a challenge because the school does not have facilities to help them so they miss school on the days they have to go to antenatal clinics for check-ups.

• The school’s greatest challenge is the depressed SES of the parents. They are unemployed so they don’t have money to pay the school. Some parents drink and set a bad example for the children.

• Gross overloading and crowded classrooms. The school recently acquired the services of an additional educator and the SGB agreed to pay her out of school fund.

• Shortage of resources especially learning materials.
4.5 INTERVIEW TWO: PRINCIPAL OF KNOWLEDGE HIGH SCHOOL

Knowledge High School is in a township. It has recently moved to premises vacated by an underutilized primary school. Before now, it had no permanent structures since its inception more than 10 years ago. When the numbers of learners in the primary schools in the area got depleted because of the exodus of learners to former Model C schools in town, the few that were left merged, leaving vacant the premises now occupied by Knowledge High School. The challenge is that the school was built for primary school children but is now used by high school children. Structural adjustments need to be made but there are no funds to affect them. The school is in a bad shape and needs to be renovated. The classrooms are dilapidated; the windowpanes are broken, the walls have not been painted for a long time; the floors are bare and cold. The furniture in the classrooms is broken and in need of repair or replacement. The chalkboard is old, shiny and slippery. The general atmosphere is depressing.

The principal is a university graduate with an MED degree. He is in his late forties to early fifties.

4.5.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children.

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children. In what areas are parents involved?

Response: The school experienced a problem in this regard. Parents have this perception that the SGB should represent them and there is no need for them to involve themselves in school. The SGB unfortunately are not knowledgeable and not fully capacitated even to play their roles as expected. There is also a perception that teachers should do everything. The principal and staff have tried strategies to bring the parents to the school but those strategies have not been successful. Parents only come to school
only when there is a problem, for example, when their child has committed a serious offence.

4.5.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.
Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
Learners claim that the parent is busy or is working when in actual fact they do not live with their parents. The parent may be working in Cape Town or in another town. Some live with their grandmothers who are too old to attend meetings.

There are learners who are AIDS orphans. Some do not have birth certificates. Some live in foster homes. There are some who live with friends. All these categories of learners cannot bring parents. By looking at some learners it is easy to see that they lack parental care. They are poor and sickly, and ever hungry. They are very academically challenged and the teachers get fed up with them.

The teachers are not capacitated to handle special cases like challenged children. There is no psychologist in the school, and no health advisory committee. There is a problem of drug abuse in the school. Some copy drug taking from their fathers.

The SGB is not fully functional because they are not aware of their roles and responsibilities. They receive no training on the job they are expected to perform.

4.5.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.
Do parents meet their financial obligations?
Response:
Only 0.01% of parents pay school fees. The parents cannot be blamed because the DoE announces in the media that paying school fees is not a prerequisite for admission to school.

4.5.4 Question Four: Communication

*For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.*

*How do you communicate with the parents?*

Response:
The school communicates through the learners. Sometimes the school has to use harsh strategies to bring the parents to school, like forcing the learners to bring their parents. That also does not help much.

4.5.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

*Challenges retard the progress of the school.*

*What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?*

Response:

- The school has no caretaker to keep gates locked. Boys go home at break time and they smoke dagga and come back from break intoxicated. The teachers find it difficult to teach learners in this state.
- Lack of resources. Books are not sufficient. There are no playing fields.
- Lack of money for structural adjustments.

4.6 INTERVIEW THREE: PRINCIPAL OF REVELATION HIGH SCHOOL

The interview took place in the principal’s office. We sat facing each other. There was a lot of traffic in and out of the office during the interview because the phone, duplicating/photocopier machine and the fax machine are in the principal’s office.
Staff came in and used the photocopier, collected faxes and came to answer the phone. There is only one telephone line in the school and it is in the principal’s office and there are no extension lines to other offices including the clerk’s office. The principal answered the phone a few times during the interview.

After thanking the principal for his time and assuring him of the confidentiality of the interview (despite the traffic and the listening ears at the photocopier and fax and phone). I told him that he could respond in whatever language he was comfortable with. The responses were both in English and IsiXhosa.

The principal of the school described the environment of the school as a semi-squatter camp area where there is a high rate of unemployment and high poverty. The rate of crime is high and a large number of the residents of the area are challenged with HIV/AIDS. Learners of the school sometimes have to miss classes because they have to look after parents or relatives who are dying of AIDS. If this gets known by other learners some sympathise while others distance themselves from the affected learners.

Because of the environment of the school, security is a big challenge, for the school, for learners and for teachers. There are 856 learners enrolled.

4.6.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children.

In what areas are parents involved?

Response:
Involvement is not happening as envisaged by the DoE. It varies from year to year. From 1998-2000 parents were excited and involved in school activities. They visited the school and attended meetings. But that changed from 2004 onwards. It is thought the lack of support from the DoE is the cause of the loss of interest. Other reasons for loss of interest cited by the principal include:
• Lack of training of the SGBs. From 1997 to date none of the SGBs were ever trained in performing their functions.
• The school is challenged with a lot of discipline problems but the SGB and the parents do not help the school in solving these problems.
• Lack of funds in the school. The school is a Section 21 school. There is a discrepancy between the promised funds and the funds that are made available. There are not enough funds even to do repairs. Most parents have no skills to help the school so the school has to pay for outside help for every service rendered. This becomes a burden for parents because they are not working.
• Parents see involvement as a lot of work.

4.6.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
The school has never had more than 100 parents attending a meeting (out of a total of 856 parents) irrespective of the time of the meeting. It may be an afternoon during the week or a Sunday afternoon but it makes no difference. Saturdays are out. Parents are very busy on Saturdays with funerals, weddings, and so on. Wednesday afternoons are better. Those who attend cannot sit for more that one-and-a-half hours since they come straight from work and have to go home to prepare supper. The principal ends up steamrolling the meeting. Only grade eight parents attend meetings. There was a confession that not all avenues have been exhausted, to get the parents to come to school like visiting the children’s homes. It is felt that parents do not see the value of education.
4.6.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees. 

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response: 
Parents do not engage in any form of fundraising. They do not pay school fees. Of the 856 learners enrolled in the school, only 256 had paid school fees at the time of the interview (it was June). Some parents have money but they just do not pay. Some parents give their children school fees, but it never gets paid in. When learners are asked why their parents do not pay, they respond that in the media it was announced that parents should not pay school fees. Learners themselves do not see the rationale for paying fees. As a result of this the school cannot meet the requirements of the curriculum because of a lack of books. The number of textbooks the school can buy out of school funds is limited to 60 and learners have to share books. Parents are not aware of these inconveniences. They do not understand that that they can contribute by, for example, buying stationery and the portfolios.

4.6.4 Question Four: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa. 

How do you communicate with the parents?

Response: 
Letters are sent home with the learners. Only in emergency cases is the phone used.

4.6.5 Question 5: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school.
What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?

Response:

- Disciplinary problems which affect the school and make it difficult to offer quality teaching and learning.
- Vandalism. This explains why the photocopier, fax, phone, etc are housed in the principal’s office. It is the safest place in the school because it has burglar proofing.
- Lack of security for both people and property and lack of money to secure the services of a security company.

4.7 INTERVIEW FOUR: PRINCIPAL OF KICKOFF HIGH SCHOOL

The school is a traditionally black school, situated in a township which was built for the professional black people but very close to and surrounded by informal settlements. The principal of the school described it as semi-urban because of the calibre of people who populate it. Children of the area attend schools in former Model C schools in town. The school itself is populated by learners from the surrounding informal settlements. The school enrolment stands at 677 (in May 2007). The learners from the informal settlements originally came from the rural backgrounds, and have recently immigrated to the informal settlements.

The school shares its premises with a primary school. The high school and the primary school have their breaks at different times, resulting in one group making a noise for the other during teaching time. This poses a challenge for both schools.

The interview was conducted in both English and isiXhosa in the principal’s office, which was tiny and had just a desk, a filing cabinet and a plastic chair. The principal is male and in his early forties.
4.7.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children.

In what areas are parents involved?

Response:
In this school parent involvement is very poor. The underlying factor is that parents do not value education because they themselves are not educated. Their primary activity is to survive. As a result of that the drop-out rate is very high. Some of the families were described as dysfunctional because of social problems like parents drinking.

The SGB was said to be functioning although they have limitations because they are not highly educated. They are not involved in the extra-curricular activities like music, soccer, netball, rugby and athletics. It was felt that parents are not entirely to blame because the SMT do not involve parents to capacitate them, nor have they received training regarding their roles and responsibilities. The time the DoE allocates for the training is awkward for the parents so they cannot attend that either.

4.7.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
At meetings not more than 50 parents attend. There is no right time to call a meeting. To accommodate parents, meetings are called at the weekend. Still they do not attend. If meetings are held during the week, it does not make a difference. They cannot be held in the in the evening because the parents come from a distance from the school.
There is also no guarantee that parents get the invitations to meetings. A reply slip is attached but that also does not guarantee that it is the parents who sign them.

4.7.3 Question 3: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:
From the beginning of the year until the time of the interview (May) only about 20% of the parents had paid school fees. Many only pay towards the end of the year so that they can get the children’s progress reports. There is a concern that parents have a culture of not paying.

4.7.4 Question Four: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.

How do you communicate with the parents?

Response:
The school communicates through the learners by sending letters and notices home with the learners. There are no ways to ensure that the parents receive the letters. Even when the school sends a tear off reply slip, there is no guarantee that it is the parent who has signed it. The school does not keep a copy of parents' signatures.

4.7.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school.

What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?
Response:

• The school does not have its own building and there is a dire shortage of space which has resulted in overcrowding in classrooms. It shares the yard with an under-utilized primary school. This is left to the principal alone to solve. Parents do not put pressure on the DoE. All administrative channels have been exhausted but nothing has happened so far.

• Educators are demotivated because they receive no support from the DoE - their employer.

• Declaring the school a Section 21 school posed a big problem. Quintile 5 schools are the most affluent. The school is in an awkward situation because although the school is situated in a good suburb, the learners come from poor surrounding informal settlements where a large number of parents are unemployed and poor.

• The money allocated for books is far from sufficient and learners have to share books. That implies that at any given time there are learners who have to sit without books.

• There is high absenteeism even of grade twelves. The day before the interview, 18 learners were absent. When asked why they missed school, learners give such reasons as lack of money for transport or they were looking after their children who were sick. Some learners are mothers already.

• The pregnancy rate in the school is very high. Between 10 and 15 pregnancies occur in a year. That is coupled with a high incidence of HIV/AIDS. Some learners disclose; others do not. Teachers are challenged when it comes to dealing with pregnant and sick learners because they do not have the skill to deal with such. Only two staff members received some form of training in helping learners cope with the disease.

• The school experiences discipline problems. Some learners live by themselves in their own shacks. No one is responsible for them, as a result they sometimes come late to school or bunk classes.

• Learners abuse drugs and are sometimes caught smoking dagga on the school premises.
• The teachers in the school have no support staff like caretakers, secretaries, watchmen or cleaning staff. As a result of this, the school gets broken into and vandalized from time to time and the school furniture is stolen.

• The school cannot make ends meet because they are operating on a small budget. The principal believes that there can be no quality of education.

4.8 INTERVIEW FIVE: PRINCIPAL OF BUILD IT HIGH SCHOOL

Build It High School is situated in a township and is populated mostly by learners from the surrounding informal settlements. The parent community is of a low socio-economic status. The school lacks facilities like playing fields as a result the school is not involved in any sports. Learners do not have a recreational facility like a hall. The closest library is a kilometre away and “it is time consuming for learners to use it”

The principal of the school had been on sick leave for a year. The deputy principal assumed duties of the principal. He is a young coloured man of around middle to late thirties. He was initially redeployed to the school.

The school is surrounded by informal settlements from which most learners come. According to the deputy principal, in this community school children fend for themselves because they live on their own without parents. There are some who survive with food from dirt bins.

The interview took place in the principal’s office (although the deputy has his own office) where it was quiet and there were no disturbances. The atmosphere was cordial. The interview was conducted in English.

4.8.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children.
In what areas are parents involved?

Response:
The parents of the school are not involved in school activities. Because they are illiterate, they think they cannot play a role. The school has tried to engage them in fund-raising activities but they did not involve themselves.

Even with the SGB only two or three members are actively involved. They cannot be blamed because the DoE does not tell them what role they should play. The SGB is not trained in the roles they should play.

Parents do not want to move with the changes. They do not understand the NCS report and it has to be explained to them. However it can only be explained to those who attend meetings.

The school helps the community when they want to apply for social grants or to use the photocopier.

4.8.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
Parents do not attend parent meetings. They only come when their children fail. When invited them to grade meetings, only about 10% turn up.

4.8.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?
Response:
About 20% of parents pay school fees. The school relies upon sponsorships. The funding the school receives from the DoE is insufficient. There is no photocopying machine. The only one used at school is hired and rental is paid monthly. There are no sufficient funds to buy books for each learner. The school was described as rural because it lacks basic needs.

4.8.4 Question Four: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa. How do you communicate with the parents?

Response:
Letters are sent home with the learners but learners do not want parents to be involved or even to come to school. Sometimes learners are sent home to fetch their parents when there is a need but this does not help either; parents still do not come. Lack of communication between these parents and the school makes the teachers’ work difficult.

4.8.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school. What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?

Response:
- The violent nature of learners is a great challenge. Boys beat girls. It is believed this is a spillover from home. Some of the children are very unruly. One boy said to his mother, “I will kill you.” There are times when the school has to call in the police.
- The school is challenged with learners who do drugs.
- Pregnancy among girls is rife.
• Burglaries and the burglars get information about what is available at school from the learners. Only the administration block is fitted with an alarm, which is where all the school assets are.

• Lack of co-operation and support from the DoE. Departmental officials come only when there is a problem.

• Poverty is a challenge. Parents want their children to get out of the poverty cycle but the environment does not allow it. Unemployed parents cannot afford to give their children a good education that would make that a reality.

• Parents don’t see the value of education. They readily buy their children designer clothes for large sums of money but find it hard to pay school fees.

• Learners have friends who do not go to school. In the afternoons and on weekends, these learners spend much time with these friends. This means they cannot do their homework or study. This puts a lot of pressure on them, and their progress through school is negatively affected.

• HIV/AIDS is another challenge. Sometimes a learner has to miss school to look after a mother who is dying of some AIDS related diseases.

4.9 INTERVIEW SIX: PRINCIPAL OF SHUSHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

Shushu Primary School is situated in a township. Most of the population there are people who come from the farms and from the former homelands of Transkei and Ciskei. Almost all are illiterate. There is a high rate of unemployment in that area and a lot of alcohol abuse and drugs in the area. There is a high incidence of HIV/AIDS and the school has a number of orphans. Prevalent in the area is child abuse.

The interview was conducted during the teacher strike for 12% salary increase. The principal kindly agreed to be interviewed at her home. The interview took place in her lounge over a cup of tea. It was very quiet. The principal was about to retire, having been in the school as principal for over 30 years.
4.9.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:

• The SGB members are uneducated and illiterate and still need a lot of training. The SGB handbook is not much help because the members cannot read. The DoE has tried to help the SGB by organizing workshops, but this has not helped because the SGB do not attend these workshops. What helps is the assistance they receive from the previous SGB.

• The SGB are required to draw policies for the school as well as the code of conduct, but they do not know how to do these things. They have to be guided by the principal and the teacher component of the SGB who eventually draw up the policies.

• The SGB is also required to monitor the finances of the school. This they do not do because they are not educated and not skilled in carrying out those activities.

4.9.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

• The parents attend parent meetings. Parents of different grades attend meetings on different days. Every child is required to bring her/his parent.

• The reason for holding separate meetings is that the school does not have a venue big enough to accommodate all the parents simultaneously. There is no school hall.
In summer general parent meetings for all parents are held outside under the trees.

The right time to hold meetings is from six o’clock in the evening so that the parents can come straight from work to the meeting.

During meetings parents contribute very positively and come up with plans and ideas of what can be done but when it comes to implementing the plans practically, then they disappear.

### 4.9.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.*

*Do parents meet their financial obligations?*

**Response:**
The school charges a very small amount of fees per year because the parents are poor and cannot afford much. Despite that only about 70% of parents pay school fees. Those who cannot afford get an automatic exemption but they have to pay in kind by coming to clean the administration block.

### 4.9.4 Question Four: Communication

*For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.*

*How do you communicate with the parents?*

**Response:**
- The school communicates with the parents through writing letters to the parents and give them to the learners to deliver. As noted earlier, the parents of the school are illiterate cannot read the letters and notices.
- Important matters are announced at the parent meetings and meetings of the street committees.
4.9.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school. What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?

Response:
• Although the school is a Section 20 School, there is a shortage of books that should be supplied by the DoE but that the school has to buy from school funds.
• The school has no playgrounds and the school does not have organized games like soccer or netball or track and field events.
• Classrooms are overcrowded where in some cases there are 53 learners in a class.
• The DoE provides bread and soup (or cold drinks). When there is a disruption in this programme, learners stay way from school as school attendance is closely linked to the feeding scheme.
• The school has a lot of children who are abused. There are many reported cases of child abuse. The children are abused by people who are registered as foster parents so that they can get the government grant. The number includes AIDS orphans. This is evident in the children’s bodies. The children report that the foster parents buy liquor with the money. When the cases are reported to Child Line, they immediately remove the children from the abusers. The school had a case of a child who was taken by a neighbour claiming that the child had nobody to look after him. It turned out that the child had relatives. The DoE was alerted of the matter with photographs of abuse attached. At the time of the interview no response had been received despite the fact that a lot of time had elapsed.
Woodbundle Primary School is situated in a township. It has an enrolment of 727 learners. The majority of the learners come either from the single men’s quarters nearby or from a nearby informal settlement. The principal described the people of the area as ‘raw’ and are ‘not ashamed to do things in front of the children’. The majority of the parents are unemployed and very poor.

The principal is a middle-aged woman who is very dedicated and committed to the school. The interview took place in her office, which is tastefully furnished. It was quiet except for the phone that rang a few times and which she ignored. There was also a noise of children playing outside. We sat across from each other. I explained that she was free to express herself in either isiXhosa or English - whichever she was comfortable with. She spoke mainly in isiXhosa but used English as well.

4.10.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children.

In what areas are parents involved?

Response:

- In the past three years, parents were not involved much until 2003 when one of the teachers enrolled in an Advanced Certificate in Education programme at the University, which required that she conduct a project of involving parents in the school. This improved parent involvement although they are not 100% involved.
- Refreshments play a big role in getting the parents to avail themselves at school.
- Parents sometimes volunteer to clean toilets, work in the garden, sit in classes when teachers are absent from school, etc.
• When the school has visitors, parents are invited to come and clean the school and they come.

• At the beginning of the year, parents attend meetings because this is the time they enrol their children in school. They also attend quarterly meetings.

• In June and December when progress reports are given out, not all parents come to collect the reports and the school ends up giving the reports to the children although this is not the policy of the school.

• In the extra curricular activities they are not much involved.

• The area in which they are involved is in fundraising.

4.10.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

Only about 40% of parents attend meetings. Reasons for non-attendance at meetings include lack of interest in school matters, incompetence, lack of knowledge, and work commitments. When parents cannot attend a meeting, they are required to write a letter of apology, as a verbal apology is not accepted. The challenge with this policy is that parents are not literate and cannot write the letters. They therefore neither attend nor apologise.

4.10.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:

• Only 50% of parents pay school fees.
• They do not involve themselves in fundraising.
• There are parents who get the government child grant but they do not pay school fees. When asked, the children allege that “my mother gets the money but she drinks it (uses it to buy liquor)”. Some biological parents take the money and leave the children with the grannies.
• The SGB do not involve themselves in fundraising. They also do not volunteer to maintain the school. They have to be asked to help. They do not see it as their duty to maintain the school.
• The treasurer is not functioning because he is incompetent.

4.10.4 Question Four: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.
How do you communicate with the parents?

Response:
• The school communicates with the parents verbally or sends notices. When a child is reported to have been absent for a long time, the principal writes to the parent. As indicated earlier, parents cannot read the letters and notices, as they are illiterate. The assumption is that parents will find someone who can read the letter for them.
• The teachers and the principal phone the parent at work (for those who are working as domestic workers or general workers) when a child is sick or a teacher has laid a complaint against a child.

4.10.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school.
What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?
Response:

- Child abuse. Sometimes when a parent is called in, she does not accept that the child is abused, mostly because the child is abused by the mother’s partner.

- Poverty. The school has a feeding scheme but sometimes bread does not always arrive leaving the children with nothing to eat. Some children come to school on an empty stomach. Sometimes teachers bring children food from their own homes. Even children who have parents are poor.

- Illiteracy. Parents are illiterate and cannot support an academic programme. They just tell their children they don’t know this or that. They are always advised to seek help in the community.

- Some children drop out of school mostly because of pregnancy.

- The school is challenged with orphans who live on their own but who don’t want help. Some children are HIV positive. Some disclose their status while others don’t. The school refers those who disclose their status to support centres and social workers. Learners get food parcels from a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works with schools.

4.11 INTERVIEW EIGHT: PRINCIPAL OF CHARLIE PRIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Charlie Pride Primary School is situated in a township. The principal of the school describes the environment of the school as semi-rural. The school is 45 years old having been established in 1962. Nine hundred and thirty learners are enrolled, mainly from the neighbouring informal settlements. The majority of the township children attend school in town in the former Model C schools. The residents of the township are working class. The mission of the school is to reclaim those children from the former Model C schools.

The interview took place in the principal’s office, which is very tastily furnished. It is equipped with a computer, a printer and a phone. The atmosphere was cordial and quiet. The lady principal is in her late thirties or early forties.
4.11.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children.

In what areas are parents involved?

Response:

- Black parents from informal settlements generally do not involve themselves in the education of their children. Very few are involved. They are not negative towards school; they just shift the responsibility to the teachers. An example of that is a parent who will report that her child drinks (liquor). When asked what she has done about it, she will shrug her shoulders and say, ‘these children do not take us seriously’. It is for that reason that it is difficult to enforce the code of conduct.

- In the old regime, parents were not involved in education. The teachers try to educate the parents but the change is slow.

- Some SGB parent members are very active, but because they are neither educated nor trained in managing the school, they can only help in the projects that staff identifies. They do not come with any innovations on their side.

- Whenever visitors and sponsors are going to visit the school, parents come to clean the school.

- One SGB member teaches learners how to do beadwork. The school sells the finished products to raise funds. That is just one parent out of the whole lot.

- Parents can’t be involved in curriculum issues because they are illiterate.

4.11.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.

Do parents attend these meetings?
4.11.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:

• About 80% of the parents of the school are unemployed. However they do not help the school in any way because they are lazy. They do not take education seriously. School fees are only R40 per year, but parents will not contribute anything. The school has to rely on fundraising and donations and sponsorships to afford all the resources they need. The media informs parents that they do not need to pay school fees because the DoE gives the schools enough money to run the schools. The R19,00 allocation per child for books is insufficient. The school ends up buying the children books and portfolios out of school fund. Parents don’t make up the shortfall.

• A trust fund was opened and already the school bank account stands at R40 000.

• Parents including the SGB do not help raise funds.
4.11.4 Question Three: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.
How do you communicate with parents?

Response:
The school communicates with the parents through writing letters to the parents and give them to the learners to deliver. As noted earlier, the parents of the school are illiterate cannot read the letters and notices. Letters are sent home with the learners but learners do not want parents to be involved or even to come to school. Sometimes learners are sent home to fetch their parents when there is a need but this does not help either; parents still do not come.

4.11.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school.
What challenges do you experience at school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over-involving) themselves in school activities?

Response:
The following challenges were identified and it is believed that they could be eliminated if not completely eradicated if parents were fully involved in school:

- Vandalism and theft of school property is the school’s greatest challenge. Some company sponsored the wiring and supply of electricity to the entire school. At the time of the interview, those cables had been stolen. The vandals ripped off everything. When it is overcast, it is dark and cold in the old prefabricated classrooms and no effective teaching and learning can take place. In such conditions, children are sent home. The copper pipes were also stolen in the toilets. The DoE took long to repair them. The school is allocated R10 000,00 per annum, which is insufficient to effect repairs and maintain the school. If parents were involved, they
would perhaps send a parent delegation to the DoE to put a case for more money. They would be more active in looking after the school.

- Discipline poses a challenge. Some children are not subjected to any rules and discipline at home. Some learners, as young as grade three, only get home at eight at night. The whole day they are with friends in the street.
- Drugs are rife. Learners bring dagga to class. The school calls the police. Once in a while the school invites nurses to come and educate the learners about the health risks of taking drugs. There is no telling if that has any effect.
- Services of a remedial teacher and a psychologist are desperately needed. For psychological testing the school has a backlog dating back to 2002 (it is 2007). Remedial education cannot be done in class because it would be very embarrassing to the children most needing it. The teacher has to do it after school at the time the child has to be going home with other learners.
- HIV/AIDS pose another challenge. In some cases both parent and child are HIV positive. There is no money to feed them nourishing food. Sometimes teachers collect money and food among themselves and provide the needy children with food. Cases that have disclosed their status are referred to the clinic. A story was told of a grade R child who had recently died of an HIV/AIDS related illness. School nurses are few.
- Violence and abuse against the children. In the previous year the school had a case where one of the children was raped.

4.12 INTERVIEW NINE: PRINCIPAL OF HORSERADISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Horseradish Primary School starts from grade R to grade nine. It is situated in a township. Less than a kilometre away is a police station. That makes the school relatively safe and secure compared to the rest of the schools in the township. Despite that, there are reported incidents of robbery of the teachers not far from the school premises and incidents of theft by parents when they come to fetch learners from the school.
Across the street from the school is a community hall with sports facilities inside. The girls from the school practice and play netball inside the hall. Less than a kilometre away is a stadium with sports fields where the boys practice and play rugby, soccer and cricket. In a sense the school is ahead of many township schools in terms of sporting facilities even if they do not belong to the school.

The principal is over 60 and is nearing retirement. He has been with this school for over 30 years.

4.12.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children.

In what areas are parents involved?

Response:

• Parental involvement in the school is not satisfactory because the SGB does not know the role they should play. They think they have to play policeman over the teachers. The principal has to protect the teachers from victimization by the SGB.

• There is a strong feeling that the SGB needs training by the DoE. So far the DoE just conducts a workshop for one or two days and expect the SGB to know everything. It is not thought they can be effective.

• The teachers see themselves as professionals and do not want to mix and work with the parents. The teachers themselves do not know what role the parents should play.

• The SGB only attend meetings and take minutes but never follow up on the resolutions. The DoE requires that there be four sub-committees in the school - one for development, one for finance, one for the environment and one for sport. Each of these committees should be chaired by the members of the SGB and each should follow upon the resolutions that are taken in meetings. The SGB are not aware of these expectations and it is not the principal's duty to inform them.
4.12.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

- Parents do not attend meetings in general and specifically when it is time to elect the SGB. They do not want to be elected to the SGB. The school once came up with a strategy to get them to be present at the elections, but it did not work. The strategy was just to invite them to a meeting and not tell them that there were going to be elections. But as soon as they heard that there were going to be elections, they left.
- Parents are busy with family responsibilities and work commitments. They fear teachers. They also do not see why teachers should want them to help with schoolwork when they (teachers) are hired to teach their children.
- Parents only come to school for four reasons:
  - When they come to register their children when they start in grade one.
  - When they come to collect progress reports.
  - When their child has been punished or when they are called in because their child is involved in drugs or some other mischief.
  - The community police forum wants to see them in school.

4.12.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:

A large majority of parents do not pay school fees because they are not employed. The few that work on odd jobs are poor. The ones who are unemployed do not help
the school in any way. The school has to pay a private person to do odd jobs for the school. AIDS orphans get a government grant but the foster parents use the funds to buy alcohol and have nothing left to pay the school. They use the money for their own businesses and do not even pay the school or buy the children food and school uniform.

4.12.4 Question Four: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa. How do you communicate with the parents?

Response:
Letters or notices of meetings are sent through the learners (although the intended recipients cannot read them because they are illiterate). Sometimes parents do not receive the letters because the learners do not deliver them. Communication is therefore not effective.

4.12.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school. What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over involving) themselves in school activities?

Response:
The following challenges were identified:

• Vandalism of the school despite the presence of the police forum and the police patrols.
• Theft from classrooms by parents when they come to fetch their grade R children.
• Poverty in the area which spills off into the school. Children not having resources that should be provided by parents.
• Children not living with their parents but with relatives or grant holders who have no commitment in the education of the child.
Church Street Primary School is a private, church school. It shares the same premises as the church that is co-funding it. It is situated in a township. Four hundred and eighty two learners are enrolled in the school.

The principal is an African who comes from outside South Africa. He is in his early forties. He has been in the country for a number of years and can understand though not speak the vernacular.

The interview took place during a general teacher strike for a 12% raise in salaries. The school did not involve themselves in the strike action because the teachers of the school do not get paid by the government. However on the day of my visit, the principal was the only person present in the school as all teachers and learners had been threatened and intimidated by teachers and learners of surrounding public schools to stay away. He only went to school to honour my appointment.

The interview was conducted in his office, which is modestly furnished. He has a secretary who also had not come to work on that day because of the teacher strike. We sat facing each other. After I explained the purpose of my research, I asked for permission to use the tape recorder to capture the interview, which he granted. I assured him of the confidentiality of the interview.

4.13.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the education of their children.

In what areas are parents involved?

Response:
Parents of the school are involved at different levels - in the classroom, in the projects of the school in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and in the School
Board, which is the SGB. At classroom level it is basically to assist the learners in their work. This depends on the teacher. Teachers usually write notes to the parents, in the communication book or the homework book. They communicate with the parent and ask the parent to assist the child in a particular task. In that way the parents are involved in the learning activities of their children.

The PTA holds quarterly meetings with the rest of the staff where principal and staff share the vision of the school as well as the challenges that are experienced in implementing that vision. The PTA comes up with solutions needed to realise the vision. At such meetings it is where the parents are told of certain projects that they need to work on. The Executive Committee of the PTA works out mechanisms and programmes of how to implement those projects. So the parents are involved in what are the immediate things that they can attend to in the school.

The School Board, which is the SGB, is the body that monitors the functioning of the school policies and employs educators. They also monitor the effective management by the school administration. Parents are represented in the School Board, which makes sure that policies are in line with national policies of the government.

4.13.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school, they need to attend parent meetings invited by the SGB.
Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
Attendance at meetings stands at 50% of enrolment. The school realizes that not all 482 learners have parents. One parent may have two or three children. Fifty percent is regarded as good attendance.
4.13.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

The parents of the school are very supportive. Those that are struggling come and report at the school and their children are put on the sponsorship programme that was organized for such a purpose way back in 1999.

4.13.4 Question Four: Communication

For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.

How do you communicate with the parents?

Response:
The principal said the school communicates with the parents through sending letters and notices home with the children and phoning when there is need. The parents of this school are to a great extent literate and can respond in writing.

4.13.5 Question Five: Challenges that block the progress of the school

Challenges retard the progress of the school.

What challenges do you experience as school as a result of parents not fully involving (or over-involving) themselves in school activities?

Response:

The principal identified following challenges:

• Space. The school has a very small yard such that there are no playgrounds for the learners.
• The school had several burglaries the previous year and 15 computers were stolen.
• Overcrowding in classrooms and the challenge to accommodate 482 learners. The school had a surge of enrolment because of children who came back from the former Model C schools in town. It implied breaking up classes into smaller numbers and employing more educators. This cannot be a reality because school fees are quite low.
• Poor parents who cannot pay school fees.
• Single parents who neglect their children and then live from one place to another such that children have to be taken care of by neighbours.
• HIV/AIDS. Some guardians visit the school to inform the school of a parent that passed away because of some HIV/AIDS related illness. However the school does not have statistics of how many children are infected because of the confidentiality policy.

4.14 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS

Principals were asked to comment on the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children, specifically in school activities. The study found that the majority of parents do not involve themselves in school activities. They (parents) have this perception that the SGB represents the parents and there is therefore no need for them to involve themselves individually. Another perception is informed by the past when it was not imperative for parents to involve themselves in school because the teachers were perceived to be sufficient. It was also found that some parents perceive involvement in school as a lot of work. The principals do not blame the parents for not involving themselves in school because the parents are not aware of this requirement. Even the SGBs are not informed of the critical roles and responsibilities they should be playing in school governance. They are also not empowered to carry out the envisaged duties and responsibilities.

The principals further admit that the schools do not take the initiative to capacitate the parents; instead they wait for the DoE to do this function. It was recognized that even if the DoE would organize such workshops, it would be impossible for some working SGB members to attend such workshops due to work commitments. An
interesting finding, however, was that even parents do find time to go the school if they thought that their children had been treated unfairly.

The study found that unemployed parents would not help the school if they were not going to be paid for services rendered.

The exception to the above was the Church Street Primary School where the envisaged partnership between home and school seems to be a reality. The advantage is that all the parents of the school and the whole SGB are members of the same church. The school and the church are located on the same premises. Everybody meets everybody at least once a week. Announcements for SGB meetings are made at church.

The principals were asked if parents do attend parent meetings where they would be informed of what went on at school. The finding was that generally parents do not attend school meetings. It is believed that some parents may not be receiving notices of meetings or letters of invitation that the schools send through the learners. There is also a belief that even if they received the notices or invitations, they would still not attend meetings because of a lack of interest in the school. A disturbing finding was that a large number of learners live by themselves. They do not have parents. Their parents are either working out of town or a dead. There is also a group of (once single) mothers who at some stage get married and go and live with the new husband in another township and leave the children either alone or in the care of the grandmother who in any case is not expected to attend school meetings because of old age and poor health.

For the school to survive and be able to carry out its core business of teaching and learning, financial resources need to be made available by the parents as well as the DoE. The principals were asked whether parents met this obligation. The finding was that the majority of parents did not support the school financially. The main reasons for non-payment of school fees is the (mis)information relayed to parents through the media that they do not need to pay school fees because education in South Africa is free. Some cite a culture of non-payment as the reason for non-payment of fees because even parents who are employed or get a government child
support grant do not pay. Lack of financial resources in the schools was identified as the cause of dysfunctional schools.

It was also found that parents as well as the SGBs do not involve themselves in fundraising activities for the school. This is justified by the principals as lack of capacity to raise funds or as ignorance of this expectation.

By the principals’ own admission, schools were faced with challenges that impacted negatively on teaching and learning. They believe that if parents took ownership of the school and were more involved these would not be an issue or if they were, they would be taken care of by the parents. Challenges identified, among others, included the following:

• Vandalism, burglaries and theft of school property.
• A high rate of pregnancy among girls with high drop-out rates as a consequence.
• HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and discipline.
• Lack of physical and financial resources that are born of a depressed SES of the parents as a result of either illiteracy or low standard of education.
• Lack of security for both property and people.
• Illiteracy and lack of capacity of the SGBs.
• Absenteeism that is caused by failure of the feeding scheme in the very poor schools.
• Lack of support services for the school.
• The violent nature of learners which principals believe is a spillover from home.
• Child abuse especially by the partners of the mothers or by other siblings.
• Lack of support by the DoE.

The next chapter deals with findings from focus group interviews with the teachers.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

Focus group interviews were conducted with the teachers of the ten selected schools in Port Elizabeth to investigate the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children as envisaged by SASA. In Chapter Three, theoretical underpinnings of the focus group interview were discussed at length and that discussion will not be resumed in this chapter. This chapter presents findings obtained through focus group interviews with the teachers.

Teachers interact with the learners on a day-to-day basis. As custodians of the children in fulfilling their in loco parentis role for the better part of any school day, they are the first people to know the conditions that affect the children. It is mostly to them that children disclose their joys and their sorrows. It is in them that learners would readily confide if anything was bothering them. They are the first to notice if anything is wrong with the learners. It is for that reason that they are deemed a rich source of data in investigating the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children.

Citing Sarantakos, Maraj (2000:130) postulates that focus group interviews aim towards the maximization of the potential of the research by allowing the discussion to go beyond the planned themes and by encouraging the respondents to discuss as many themes as possible. Maraj is convinced that focus group interviews work because they provide a setting in which individuals are comfortable in self-disclosure and also where the group dynamics create a chain of reactions designed to exhaust the views on the topic. Teachers share a staffroom everyday where they engage in professional conversations. From personal experience as a teacher myself, I assume that one of the unavoidable topics among teachers is the learners they teach. I also assume that they would be comfortable disclosing whatever information or data they have about the learners in the presence of their colleagues especially if that information would in the end benefit the learner.
Focus group interviews were conducted with teachers at the following schools:

- Shoulders High School
- Knowledge High school
- Revelation High School
- Kickoff High school
- Build It High School.
- Shushu Primary School
- Woodbundle Primary school
- Charlie Pride Primary School
- Horseradish Primary School
- Church Street Primary School.

Findings from each school are discussed hereunder. The location and environment of each school has been described in Chapter Four and will not be repeated here.

5.2 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW ONE: TEACHERS OF SHOULDERS HIGH SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six teachers, one of which was the deputy principal. Two were educator members of the SGB. Two were level two teachers and one was a level one teacher. There were three males and three females. I conducted the interviews in English because one of the teachers was coloured but the respondents were encouraged to respond in either isiXhosa or English - whichever language they were comfortable in.

The interviews took place in the deputy principal’s office, which is comfortable and overlooks a block of classrooms. It was quiet with no disturbances. We sat in a circle and the atmosphere was cordial.

I explained the purpose of the interview and thanked the teachers for making time available to see me. I assured them of the confidentiality of the interview and asked for permission to capture the interview on a tape recorder - which was granted.
5.2.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:
Parental involvement in this school is said to be reactive involvement. Parents only come when they experience problems or when their children have failed an examination. They never come to check the progress or the wellbeing of the children. They only come to accuse teachers of a variety of things. Other than that they keep away from school. It is the month of May but parents have not made an appearance in school except to come and seek help with regard to completing either the foster grant or sponsorship forms.

5.2.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
Up to the time of the interview (May) no parents' meeting had been held. In previous years when parents were invited to a meeting, only about 50-60% came out of the average 1300 pupils enrolled each year. Reasons cited for non-attendance include the following:

- Work commitments of parents who work until late and as of necessity have to sleep over at the employer’s place.
- Learners do not tell their parents about the invitation to the meetings.
- Parents who do not care and do not see the necessity to attend parent meetings.
• Parents who do not attend meetings because of economic reasons. They have to attend to basic needs first like providing the children with food and clothes and therefore prioritise this responsibility over school meetings.
• There are learners who live with their grandparents who are too old and sickly to attend parent meetings. The teachers admitted that they do not expect grandmothers to attend meetings.
• Teachers are aware of learners who are heads of households and cannot be expected to attend parent meetings.

5.2.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:
Parents in this school do not meet their financial obligations. They are said to be poor and have no money to pay. Those who can afford to pay just do not do it. It is assumed that they are influenced by media reports that parents do not need to pay school fees as the DoE provides for all the schools.

5.2.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.

Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Response:
• Parents of the school do not help their children at home because they do not have the skills to help them since they are illiterate. As a result of that parents cannot help their children with homework.
An example was quoted to show that there are, however, a few that help the school. Parents were offered a plot the size of a rugby field to start a gardening project to feed their families. About 10% took up the offer. The ones who did not take up the offer do not want to offer to the school anything without being paid for services rendered, not even their expertise. Teachers suspected that that kind of mentality is influenced by apartheid when they used to have everything done for them.

5.2.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.

How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:
Except for letters given to learners, no other form of communication is engaged in. As indicated earlier, this exercise is not effective when parents are illiterate.

5.2.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

Have you received any training in working with parents?

Response:
None of the teachers ever received any training in working with parents. That kind of information was not in the curriculum of the teacher pre-service course any of the teachers.
5.2.7  Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.

What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:

• The teachers complained of receiving no support from the SGB. They have never even seen them nor do they know who they are. A meeting was called earlier in the year but had to be cancelled because only two SGB members turned up. The teachers accused the SGB of basic bureaucracy and posing as their watchdogs. They only show up when the results are bad. In the previous years, the school was in the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP). When in the previous year the school got out of the programme, the SGB did not come to congratulate the teachers. The SGB is said to look only for negative things. The teachers are disappointed that the SGB is letting the school down.

• Although parents are blamed, however it is recognized that they (parents) are not empowered. They don’t know what to do. They cannot manage or administer a school. They need motivation.

• Parents are said to fear the unknown. Teachers admitted that an attitude change is needed towards the parents by both teachers and the SMT included.

• High failure rate where the percentage pass is lower than 50%.

• Large classes that make it impossible for teachers to attend to individual needs. (The stipulated size of class at high school is 32:1).

• Lack of discipline that is blamed on the environment from which the learners come and the challenge of parents who leave home early. This is coupled with late coming.

• Bunking of classes by learners especially after a long weekend. Teachers believe that learners drink liquor and abuse drugs at weekends and the
after effects force them to bunk school on Monday. Instances were quoted of learners who come to school drunk on a Monday morning.

- Lack of basic resources like books and stationery. Six or more learners have to share a book. This contributes to insufficient time to complete the curriculum, and hence the high failure rate.
- Lack of security, which is evidenced by the incidents of vandalism and theft of school property.

5.3 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TWO: TEACHERS OF KNOWLEDGE HIGH SCHOOL

The group consisted of six teachers - four females and two males. They were all young adults. The interview took place in an empty classroom that has furniture in it. It was break time and they were in a hurry to go but they agreed to stay or thirty minutes.

5.3.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:

There is no parent involvement to talk about in this school. Both parents and the SGB do not show up in this school. The SGB is said to be not functional at all.

5.3.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.

Do parents attend these meetings?
Response:

Parents of this school do not attend meetings. Only about 1% or 3% turn up for meetings. That goes for the SGB too. They also do not come to school meetings. In fact the SGB is not functional at all. Reasons cited for non-attendance at meetings include the following:

- Parents are said to be illiterate. They cannot balance a bank statement. They are not acquainted with policy so they cannot contribute anything to policy implementation.

- Parents only come when there is a crisis at school like when the learners are drunk during school hours or they have been given corporal punishment. They do not come to support their children even for positive things like the prize giving ceremonies.

- Poverty is said to be the main cause of parents staying away from school. They can’t think. They cannot support their children. They can’t meet their children’s basic needs. Low economic status is linked to parent involvement.

- Parental involvement varies from area to area. The illiterate parents do not value education because they themselves are not educated. They cannot support it (education). Better class can contribute something because they have confidence in themselves; they have high a self-esteem.

- When children do not get support from the teachers, they do not know what else to do and resort to crime like robbery. Girls fall pregnant.

- Some of these children live with their grannies and depend on old age pension. The grannies are sick and cannot support the children and the school. They don’t even know they are supposed to support the school.

- When the government introduced parental involvement in education, parents were not trained in how to be meaningfully involved in school. Teachers feel it is not their duty to train the parents either.

- In some cases the school is very distant from where the children live and so it is difficult for the parents to come to school.

- Some of these children live by themselves. Their parents died. Most families are single parent families. Mothers do not live with the fathers;
the families are broken. The father has many families and can't live with all of them. The women have to struggle alone.

- Parents do not want to be elected to the SGB.

### 5.3.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.*

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:

- School fees are R100 per year but a high percentage of parents do not pay, not even in instalments. Most parents are unemployed so they cannot pay.
- The politicians confuse the parents. They talk of free education, without explaining that people who have money and are employed are still required to pay school fees. In this country there is a culture of non-payment. Parents are used to not paying for electricity or hospital fees or municipal service charges. They treat the school the same.

### 5.3.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

*Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.*

Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Response:

- Out of thirty learners, only one gets help at home. Parents cannot help with the work they themselves cannot understand. They cannot afford to pay for extra tutoring for their children. There is negligence in general.
- Children do not get discipline at home because the parents themselves are not disciplined. They tell their children that they will never go to the
child’s school because their own mothers never went to school while they themselves were at school.

5.3.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

*Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school.* Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.

*How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?*

Response:
The school communicates with the parents only through the learners because the phone and SMS are expensive. Letters can only be given to learners to take to parents because parents do not have fixed addresses in the informal settlements.

5.3.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

*For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents.* The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

*Have you received any training in working with parents?*

Response:
None of the teachers ever received training in working with parents. It was not in the curriculum of the teacher pre-service programme, nor were they ever empowered in this area by the DoE.

5.3.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

*The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning.* These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.
What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:
Some learners were said to be HIV positive and teachers feel the need to capacitate the parents about nutrition but none of them are trained to broach the subject with them. There were learners who were said to take drugs but teachers doubted if their parents are aware of the fact.

5.4 Focus Group Interview Three: Teachers of Revelation High School

The group consisted of eight teachers - all female, from post level two to post level one. The male teachers were in some form of a go slow for some demands they needed addressed before they could be fully functional in the school. The deputy principal who was going to be part of the group apologized and replaced herself with another teacher because of an emergency visit by a mother of a boy who in the previous week had stabbed another boy from the same school to death. The mother was distraught because the community members were threatening to kill her son if they found him. The boy was out on bail. The mother had come to report that the boy would not come to school again as it would be too risky.

After I thanked the teachers for their time and assured them of the confidentiality of the interview, the interview started. I explained that they were free to communicate in either isiXhosa or English - whatever they were comfortable with. The interviews were conducted in the teachers' staff room. The atmosphere was cordial.

5.4.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?
Response:
There is no parent involvement to talk about because parents of this school just do not involve themselves in the education of their children. Not so long ago the school went on an educational tour. Not one parent went with the teachers to support and help them.

5.4.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.
Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:
• Parents of this school never just come to the school. They only come when called because there has been a problem with their children like when they have failed. Parents of problematic learners never show up even when called. They send a neighbour.
• Only grade eight parents turn up for meetings. Abanye baqhelile [the others are used to the school].
• Some parents have temporary employment and cannot make the time to attend meetings.
• Some learners do not have parents. They are orphans. They live by themselves. Some parents work out of town or sleep in and children are left on their own. Some live with relatives who are not interested in education.
• Some mothers get married and go and live with the husband in another township leaving the children alone in the house.
• Although the school has a feeding scheme, some children do not take advantage of it because they are too embarrassed to disclose that they do not have food to eat.
5.4.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:

• Only about 40% of parents pay school fees. They do not even engage in fundraising activities. They don’t even come to explain that they cannot pay. They just send their children to school. They claim to hear in the media that they don’t have to pay school fees because education in South Africa is free.

• Even parents who are unemployed do not want to help with the feeding scheme or anything else. They want to be paid for services rendered to the school including feeding their own children. The garden project would have helped them to put food on the table but they would rather starve than help in the school. None volunteer to do repairs when the school has been vandalised. It is ironical that they do not support the school financially and yet expect the school to pay for everything.

5.4.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.

Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Response:

Parents are not capacitated to help children at home. When it is time to make the subject choices for the learners, the teachers send subject choice forms home with the learners. Before that is done, teachers first advise the learners on the best choices they can make. The parent then makes the choice guided by the learner.
5.4.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.

How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:
Teachers send letters home with the learners but they (learners) never deliver them. They don’t want their behaviour to be exposed to their parents.

5.4.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

Have you received any training in working with parents?

Response:
None of the teachers received training in working with parents. It was not a requirement in the curriculum.

5.4.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.

What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?
Response:

- The learners’ performance is poor because they have no support from parents.

- Learners do not do their homework

- Behaviour problems. Learners are said to be angry. They fight in and out of school. They do drugs. They stab others and get stabbed.

- Teachers are frustrated by having no support system for the learners like the psychological services or a social worker in the school. The school cannot rely on a nearby police station because it is busy.

- The environment where the school is situated is hostile. Learners do not get any support from the community. There are many taverns in the community. There is no restriction as to who can or cannot buy liquor. Children can buy liquor at the shebeens. The ones who live alone are alone even at night. It is feared what can happen to them.

- Pregnancies are rife among the schoolgirls. The pregnancy rate is as high as ten learners per year.

- Learners get robbed in and out of the schoolyard. They have friends who are tsotsis and who bring them drugs into the school premises.

- There is no security. While busy teaching, it is not uncommon to find a strange person coming into class. Two weeks before the interviews, rascals came into the school and shot one of the learners dead. Teachers have also been warned by some learners to watch what they say in class because when students are high on drugs they can be dangerous.

- Another challenge is HIV/AIDS. Few learners disclose their status even though it is evident that they are suffering. They just drop out of school when they do not have any more energy to continue.

- Illiteracy is a challenge at this school. Teachers claimed that learners come from primary school illiterate. They can’t even read what they themselves have written. Teachers think it is too much to expect them to “turn stones into bread”.
5.5 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW FOUR: TEACHERS OF KICKOFF HIGH SCHOOL

There were six teachers in the focus group - four female and two males. Four were post level two teachers and two post level one. They ranged in age between the late twenties and early forties. They all participated actively.

The interview took place in a room adjacent to the principal’s office. It has a few computers that seem to be gathering dust except one. The teachers do not have a proper staff room. Plastic chairs were brought in from the classrooms. It was quiet and the atmosphere was cordial. Although it was late in the afternoon and time to go home, the teachers seemed very relaxed and in no hurry to go home.

I explained to them that they were free to express themselves either in English or isiXhosa. I thanked the teachers for their time and assured them of the confidentiality of the interview.

5.5.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:
Very few parents of Kickoff High School involve themselves in school activities. At the beginning they used to attend meetings out of curiosity to see what happens in the school but not anymore. They only come when called. Even for meetings they do not show up. The SGB members are not much involved either. Only about 60% of the SGB members are involved. The other 40% were last seen on the day they were elected.

Reasons cited for their non-involvement include the following:
• Work commitments where parents have to prioritise work over school involvement.

• The parents who were unemployed still did not involve themselves because they are lazy.

• Some parents were said to be over-committed in many other community structures.

• There are parents who feel that because they are uneducated, there is nothing they can contribute to the school.

5.5.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

• Very few parents attend meetings. Parents say they cannot come to the meetings because they are working, but when they are required to pay school fees, then they say they are not employed. They just look for excuses not to attend meetings.

• Some learners hire a parent in the street if forced to bring a parent. They promise to pay the hired parent for attending the meeting. It came out when a learner got into trouble with a ‘hired’ parent when the ‘employer’ did not pay for services rendered (attending a school meeting). The ‘parent’ came to school to get his pay but the ‘employer’ did not have any money.

• Parents do not even come to fetch progress reports at the end of the year. The school is still keeping progress reports dating back to 1995. They were never fetched.

• Parents are under great stress as a result of the struggle to survive. It was alleged that the product that sells most is the headache tablet. Parents leave home very early in the morning and come back in the evening - too tired to look at schoolbooks or attend meetings. There is no relief in sight.
5.5.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:
Very few parents pay school fees. Most parents are unemployed but they make the excuse of being at work when they do not want to attend parent meetings.

5.5.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.

Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Response:
• There is no evidence of parental involvement at home, not even assistance with homework. When letters are sent home with a tear off reply slip at the bottom with the learners, the letters come back signed - not by the parent but by learners themselves. This was discovered when one of the teachers met a parent in town and the teacher asked the parent why she does not attend meetings. The parent responded that she never received any notices of meetings.
• Teachers don’t get any help from the parents.
• Teachers doubt if the parents would help their children because no relationship exists between them. There is an allegation that children fear their parents and can’t be open with them because parents rebuff them.
• Some learners do not have parents; they live by themselves or with their grandparents.
• Some parents would like to be involved but their children don’t want them to. They don’t want parents to come to school if they are not driving an
elegant car like others. Some learners are embarrassed about their parents.

• A case was cited of a parent who came to pay school fees for a child who had dropped out of school two years earlier. The parent was not aware that the child was no longer attending school.

• Some learners spend more time in the street than at home so there can’t really be a relationship.

• Some parents are too young to take responsibility for a school child because they are children themselves. They still need to be looked after themselves.

5.5.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility. How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:

• Letters and notices of meetings are sent home with the learners.

• The school has established that the letters do not reach their intended recipients.

• Attaching a reply slip does not solve the problem because learners sign the reply slips themselves.

• The absence of parents in cases where learners live on their own makes it difficult to know who to communicate with.

5.5.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training. Have you received any training in working with parents?
Response:

- Five of the teachers were never prepared for working with parents. It was not on the curriculum at the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) where the teachers did pre-service education.

- One teacher admitted that in her teacher training, there was a section on parent involvement in education, but that information is not relevant for the type of society we live in. It is meant for an ideal society. It has to be recognized that things have changed. Parents in the past disciplined their children. The parent of today relies on the teacher to discipline the child because they (parents) are overwhelmed by the children. But the teachers are not ready for the kind of learner they are presented with. Their skills have become redundant.

- Teachers themselves need to be equipped how to deal with the child of today and how to cope. A need is felt for the presence of a psychologist to provide the needed support for both learner and teacher.

5.5.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.

What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:

- Discipline and drug abuse on the school’s premises during break.

- Learners who are promiscuous which results in pregnancies every year. A case was cited of a grade twelve learner who went into labour while writing the final examinations the previous year.

- Sick students who just get thinner and thinner and drop out when they become too weak to continue. All teachers can do is to call the parent and draw his/her attention to the matter.
• HIV/AIDS is a challenge. A minimum of 30 students on average is affected in a year. This includes 14-year-old grade eights.
• Security is of great concern. At break times all gates have to be locked. It is not uncommon to see strange faces in the classrooms.
• Absenteeism and late coming are challenges. Learners who live by themselves have to miss school at least once a week to go to work so as to buy food. Some learners prostitute to get food. Homework cannot be done when they serve clients all night. By morning they are very tired but they come to school nevertheless. That is how they afford the cell phones they have.

5.6 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW FIVE: TEACHERS OF BUILD IT HIGH SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of three teachers - one female and two males. They were the only ones willing to be interviewed. The two males were both over 50 and the lady is in her middle forties. An appointment had been made to see six teachers in the previous week, but none availed themselves. I made another appointment to see them the following week and that is when only three were willing to be interviewed. When I suggested that I make another appointment for the following week yet again, one of the three willing ones suggested that there was no guarantee that the unwilling would become willing and honour another appointment. The school is in the MIP with less than 30% pass rate passes the previous year.

I thanked the teachers for availing themselves and assured them of the confidentiality of the interview.

5.6.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school - not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?
Response:

- Parents of Build It High School are only seen on the day of the elections and after that they disappear until the next elections three years down the line. The ones who get elected never honour their portfolios.
- At the end of the year, parents do not bother to come and collect their children’s progress reports. Only two or three show up for this purpose. Reports accumulate year after year.
- Parents are not committed to education. Teachers have to discipline their children without the parents’ assistance.
- Parents are not informed or educated in what role they are expected to play. They are not sure what is expected of them.

5.6.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

- Attendance at meetings is poor because learners do not give their parents notices of meetings. They (learners) claim to have forgotten to deliver the notices. Or they hire a parent in the street and bring him/her to school.
- Mothers who work as domestic workers do not have the time to come to school meetings. It is not known if the employers deliberately deny them the opportunity to attend parent meetings or the parents do not ask for time off to attend meetings.

5.6.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?
Response:

- The majority of parents of the school are unemployed and live in informal settlements where they are challenged with social problems. The school fees is very low compared to former Model C schools but still parents cannot afford it.
- Some of these learners live with their grandmothers because their parents died.
- Sometimes the mother lives with another man/husband somewhere else and the child lives on his/her own.
- A big number of the learners have single parents who are very poor. They have to make ends meet and cannot have the time to come to school.
- According to the Act, the parents are supposed to help with fundraising. That does not happen.

5.6.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

*Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.*

*Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?*

Response:

- There is no evidence of parental involvement at home.
- Most learners live on their own or with their grandparents.
- Most parents are not educated enough to help their children.
- Most learners think the parents can’t help anyway.

5.6.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

*Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.*

*How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?*
Response:

- Teachers make the announcement on radio if they want to see the parents. Those parents who do not have radios get the message from neighbours who hear the announcement and relay it. It is the culture of black people to look out for one another.
- The school sends a child to inform another child’s parents that the school would like to see him/her.

5.6.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

Have you received any training in working with parents?

Response:
None of the teachers received any training in working with parents.

5.6.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.

What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:

- Discipline is a problem and can be traced back to the environment from which the learners come.
- Absenteeism. Late coming. No homework done. Rudeness. No manners. Learners do not dress properly.
- Learners do drugs in the toilets even while they should be in class.
• Security is a problem because there is no watchman.
• Pregnancy rate among schoolgirls is high.
• The drop-out rate ranges between 8 and 10% even among the grade elevens and twelves.
• No HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in the school and no regular health visits by school nurses.
• Some learners come to school armed with guns. The teachers cannot search them because that would be construed as a violation of the learner’s privacy.
• From time to time the school is vandalized; doors and windows are broken. There is no maintenance. Parents do not offer to maintain the school without payment.

5.7 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SIX: TEACHERS OF SHUSHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six teachers - two female and four females. They ranged in age between early thirties and fifties. Five were black and one male was coloured. Three were in foundation phase, one in the intermediate phase and two in the senior phase.

We met in the staffroom and there were no disturbances. The atmosphere was cordial. I explained the purpose of the interview, and assured them of the confidentiality of the interview. I asked for permission to capture the interview on tape. Permission was granted and the interview started.

5.7.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school - not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved in the activities of the school?
Response:

- The parents of the school are involved in some but not all activities of the school. For example, they attend school functions when invited; they respond when their help is sought when for example the school has been burgled or vandalised. A few parents come to clean the foundation phase classrooms where the children are too small to do it themselves. One teacher said there are a few parents who help their children with homework and sign the children’s books.

- Some parents do not involve themselves because they do not live with their children. They live elsewhere apart from the children. The children are left in the care of the grandmother.

- When some parents are forced to come to school, they come to school drunk.

- The community is so poor that some parents don’t even have soap to wash the children’s uniform with; as a result the learners come with dirty uniform.

- The principal believes that parents still have the old way of thinking about school when parents stayed away from school.

- Illiteracy levels are high. That contributes to parents not wanting to involve themselves in school activities, not even in homework. Bayazidelela [they put themselves down]. They don’t even want to try.

5.7.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

- The principal of the school was concerned that the same parents attend meetings. The parents who the principal and staff mostly want to see stay away from the school. The principal describes the situation as preaching to the converted. Teachers are concerned that these parents are not
aware of the needs of their children and how they (parents) can help them (children). It takes two to three attempts to finally get them (parents) to come to school.

- Parents deliberately stay away from school when they know that their child is naughty. They do not take responsibility for their behaviour of their children. They leave it to the teacher to address their children’s behaviour.
- Many of the parents abuse liquor and are said not to care [abakhathali]. Bayasela [they drink]. Many foster parents in the area get the child support grant but there is nothing to show for it.

5.7.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:

- Only about a quarter of the parents of the school pay school fees willingly. The rest have to be forced to pay. When parents are summoned to the school to come and explain why they do not pay school fees, instead of coming to school, they just give their children money to pay school fees.
- Most mothers are young and do not live with their children. Some died “because of this disease” and the children live with the grandmothers. The school does not expect the grandmothers to involve themselves in school because of age.

5.7.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.
How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:

• Learners are given invitations and notices to give to their parents but the letters and invitations never reach their intended destinations. This gets known when a parent happens to come to school and tell the principal that they never got the invitations.

• When the school urgently needs to see parents, they phone. That way they get a response. Phoning is expensive and cannot be done all the time.

• Sometimes the principal has to tell a white lie to get a parent to school. She sends another child to a parent to tell her that her child is sick and is lying in the sick room. The parent then comes running to the school.

5.7.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

Have you received any training in working with parents?

Response:

None of the teachers of the school were ever skilled in working with the parents or involving them in education of their children either by the HEIs where they trained as teachers or through in-service by the DoE.

5.7.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.
What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:

- Personal hygiene of children would be addressed if the parents involved themselves more in school. It would be much easier for the teachers to educate parents on how to prevent infections especially the rife ones in the area like tuberculosis (TB). A lot of children in the school suffer from TB which they get from their parents.

- Discipline problems would be addressed if parents came to the school. The teachers recognize that there has to be consistency in discipline between home and school. Discipline at school can only be effective if it is not reinforced at home.

- The matter of scarce resources would be addressed if parents worked and worked with teachers and were involved in school activities. An example was cited of a possibility of parents getting sponsorships from their places of work.

- Parent illiteracy would be addressed by the teachers and parents would also be skilled in helping their children at home.

- Vandalism would be lessened if parents took ownership of the school.

- Some children do not have birth certificates and parents lie about the fact. They make excuses that the certificate got lost or has been misplaced when they know that the child never had one in the first place. The teachers would help registering the children at the Department of Home Affairs.

5.8 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SEVEN: TEACHERS OF WOODBUNDLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six teachers - five females and one male. They ranged in age between the late twenties and early fifties. They have all been in the school for more than five years. While I was waiting for the teachers, one teacher brought me coffee and snacks - which was most welcome in the cold and wet weather we had on the day. When the teachers came in, tea and snacks were also brought for
them by the same teacher. I learnt later that the teacher is in the catering committee of the school. That set a positive, cordial atmosphere for the interview. We got talking about how thoughtful the catering teacher was in such bad weather. The principal had already left for some meeting elsewhere.

The interviews were held in a computer room. I informed the teachers that they could express themselves in either isiXhosa or English - whichever they were comfortable with. They code switched. Because it was break time, there was a noise of children playing outside the computer room as a result of which the tape is hardly audible. It picked up the noise.

I introduced myself and informed them of the purpose of my visit. To ensure confidentiality, we agreed to have them introduce themselves in their clan names.

5.8.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school - not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:

- Parents are not fully involved in the school. Some projects were identified in which parents could be involved and some parents volunteered to work in those projects. There were parents who volunteered to work in the garden and to clean the toilets. But that is where it ended. Only two women came to do what they volunteered to do.

- Parents do not come to parents’ meetings. Only one quarter turn up for meetings.

- There are a few parents who are involved but they are not committed. They fear being involved. At SGB elections, they do not volunteer. They wait to be elected.

- The SGB is not capacitated and is lacking in skills to be involved. They do not initiate fundraising. They come up with ideas on how we could raise
funds or go about doing the projects, but when it is time to practically implement their ideas, they do not come up. They disappear. They are not enthusiastic.

• The school had embarked on new projects that would be funded by General Motors South Africa Foundation (GMSA) (an NGO funding school projects) to paint the school buildings, to improve the grounds and to make bricks for building a boundary wall, but that also has no support from the parents. The project has stalled although the money is available.

• It is felt that parents want to be remunerated for services rendered to the school. They do not think about the development of the school but what they can get for themselves.

• When a garden project was introduced, the hall was full of parents but afterwards they disappeared. When a meeting is called to read the financial statement, the hall fills up because parents want to hear if the funds have not been misused.

5.8.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

• No. Some don’t even come to collect their children’s school reports. They do not care about the academic progress of their children.

• One reason they do not come to meetings they always think that teachers are going to ask for money and expose those who have not paid school fees. To accommodate them meetings have been called in the late afternoons when they have come back from work but they do not come. Weekends and even Sundays have been tried but that also does not work.

• Abakhathali abazali balapha [parents of this place do not care]. They always give the excuse that they can’t attend meetings because of work
commitments but when they have to pay school fees, then all of a sudden they are not employed.

• When a meeting is called for those parents who want to apply for child grant, they come in large numbers.

• Parents are just negligent and do not want to take responsibility for their children’s education. They are content to leave it in the hands of the teachers and the school.

5.8.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:

• Most parents are unemployed but there are parents who are faithful in paying school fees.

• Even those who are employed abakhathali [do not care]. They do not care about the academic progress of their children. Some get the government child grant but they still do not pay school fees. When threatened about informing the social workers that they do not pay school fees, they become negative and move their children from the school to another school.

• The environment has a negative effect on the parents. They drink a lot and most are not educated. They do not see the point in sending their children to school. They reason that despite their not being educated themselves, they survive.

5.8.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.
Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Response:
• In a class of 45 learners, only two parents sign the homework diary.
• Learners only do Mathematics in class with the teacher. They do not get help with the homework at home. This is understandable if the parents are illiterate.

5.8.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.

How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:
• Letters and notices are sent home with the learners. The letters and notices are not always delivered. When learners are aware of the reason the parent is invited to the school, they just don’t bother to deliver the letter.
• In an emergency, the teacher sends another child to the home of the parent s/he wants to see.
• Notwithstanding budgetary constraints, the phone is also used when for example a learner gets sick and needs immediate attention.

5.8.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

Have you received any training in working with parents?
Response:

• No teacher received training in working with parents at university or college. No workshops are organized to skill teachers on how to work with parents. Current challenges like HIV/AIDS and special needs education need trained personnel. Teachers cannot deal with such things. When a teacher sees all the suffering, s/he breaks down and cries in front of the class. When that happens, the learners lose confidence in the teacher. But the teacher cannot help it.

• Teachers also did not receive training to deal with learners who go out at night and who do not spend the night at home.

• It is felt that it is not effective to workshop only the girls on the HIV/AIDS issue. It is the boys who force themselves on the girls so they need to be workshopped too. Learners start as early as grade one to have sex in the school toilets. An example was given of a grade one little girl who had boys queuing to have sex with her in the school toilets. The boys claimed to have been invited by her. The matter was reported to the parent and a suggestion was made to investigate. The parent did not want an investigation. It raised suspicions that the child was doing what she is used to doing. There was also a case of learners who had sex in the churchyard next to the school. The behaviour is traced back to the careless behaviour of the parents at home. In the shacks in which children live with their parents in the informal settlements, everything happens in front of them. Brother and sister practise together what they see parents doing. Sometimes a pregnancy occurs.

• The teachers blame television for the children’s bad behaviour.

• When Love Life (an NGO involved in teaching young people about life skills) came to the school to workshop the intermediate and the senior phase learners, teachers were not allowed in, so they did not get to know what the children were taught. The feeling among teachers is that if anyone comes to teach the learners anything, teachers should be involved because they are expected to reinforce whatever the children learnt.

• There was a suggestion that learners be taught sexuality education from 10 years upwards.
5.8.7  Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.

What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:

• Discipline is a problem. It makes the teacher’s work hard. It is very challenging to teach learners who are not disciplined.

• Drug abuse. Some learners sniff glue and other harmful substances. Some learners smoke dagga during break and others add dagga to their food or soup. By the time they get to class, they are high and dazed. They hallucinate and as a result of that other problems present themselves.

• HIV/AIDS is a big challenge. Some learners have to miss school because they have to nurse mothers and sisters who are sick with some HIV related disease. The school does not have health educators who can help counsel the affected children.

• Some learners are themselves HIV positive. They tend to be very aggressive. Teachers are not equipped to deal with such children. Very few teachers have done the HIV diploma. The rest of the teachers are at a loss.

• Late coming is a problem. Only about half the school attend morning assembly and prayers. Some parents accompany their children to school when they are late but few do this.

• The environment in which the children grow is not good for them. Some mothers do not sleep in the same house as their children. They go out at night and leave the children in the care of the grandmother. There is nobody to prepare for the child as a result they sometimes come to school unwashed. The granny just sends the child to school. Most parents of the school are single. Learners themselves go out at night. These are 14-15
year olds. From school some do not go home. The parent has to go out and look for them.

- Poverty is a big challenge. Some learners come to school without food and they faint because they did not have supper the previous evening. Teachers then pay out of their pockets to get the learner something to eat. Sometimes teachers have to provide poor learners with clothes. That is why teachers are keen to have the garden project succeed so that there would be vegetables from the garden. Some parents get the government child grant but use it for other things.

- The school has a challenge of orphans who live on their own. There is a case of orphans whose parents died but who refuse to leave their home and be placed in a foster home. Their brother who is in high school looks after them. They get food parcels from Ubuntu (an NGO). One teacher related an incident that happened the previous day when one teacher had to take one orphan to the clinic because the clinic does not attend to children who are not accompanied by adults. The teacher had to leave the rest of the class unattended.

- A case was made of learners who stay out of school just to be taxi conductors at a nearby taxi rank to get a few rands. The parents may not even be aware that their child has dropped out of school. The blame is put on the government for making education compulsory and for not following up to see if that works or not, otherwise one would not find school children doing odd jobs during school hours.

- The SGB that is not capacitated to perform their duties poses a challenge in school functioning because they are not helping out where they should. It is felt that the government needs to train them in what is expected of them. They don’t come to meetings - only two or three come to meetings.

- Parents are not aware of the role they should play in the education of their children in this new dispensation since they are, like the SGB are not capacitated. They are not aware that education is compulsory and they have to make sure that this is happening. Teachers feel that the EDOs should take this responsibility.

- Teachers feel that parents are not responsible and they do not value education. One parent declared, “ndoysiwe mna ngulo mntwana” [I have
given up on this child]. The child in question is in grade three. The mother goes to work early in the morning and comes home late at night.

5.9 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW EIGHT: TEACHERS OF CHARLIE PRIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six teachers - four females and two males. Four of the teachers are post level two teachers and the other two are post level one teachers. The interview was conducted in English because one of the male teachers was coloured. I explained that they were free to express themselves in either English or IsiXhosa - whichever language they were comfortable in. The atmosphere was cordial and it was quiet in the principal’s office where the interviews were conducted.

5.9.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school - not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:

- Parents are not involving themselves in the school. Twenty seven percent attend grade meetings. Most of them abakhathali [they do not care].
- There are learners who live with their grandparents who are too old to attend meetings or contribute in any way. Some children live with relatives who have no interest in education.
- There are learners who live by themselves or stay with neighbours because their parents work out of town. Those who stay with neighbours don’t tell the neighbours about school activities.
- The school has parents who are the same age as the teachers so they ignore invitations from the teachers. Teachers feel that such parents undermine them. Some of these parents are school drop outs so they do not like being invited to school.
A case was made of an HIV/AIDS orphaned learner who lived with an 80-year-old grandmother. The child was also HIV positive and there was no one to monitor the health of the child and to see that the child eats well.

Abakhathali imajority [the majority of the parents do not care]. They do not even collect their children’s June and December reports. That means they don’t care about the progress of the children.

If for some reason learners are asked to fetch their parents from home, they (learners) just don’t come back. There is a feeling among teachers that black parents don’t care about education. They have no respect for it.

Parents do not want to help the school if they are not going to be paid. When a garden project was started at the school, only two or three parents showed interest and enthusiasm for a while but in time they wanted to be paid for their services. The school had no money to pay them so the project then stopped.

5.9.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.  

Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:

Parents do not attend meetings because of the reasons already mentioned above.

5.9.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.

Do parents meet their financial obligations?
Response:
Very few parents pay school fees. It’s not that bayasokola [they struggle], because they buy and wear expensive clothes. Single parents struggle because the fathers of the children do not contribute anything towards the education or the upkeep of the child.

5.9.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

*Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.*

Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Response:
- Teachers protect themselves from frustration by not giving the learners any homework.
- Yes, there are a few parents who help their children with homework or projects sent home.
- It depends on the relationship between parent and child. Some children arrive home long after sunset and the parent is in no mood to help him/her with the homework.
- Giving learners homework promotes absenteeism. When learners have not done their homework, they just stay at home.

5.9.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

*Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.*

How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:
Invitation and notices are sent home with the learners. Sometimes teachers get responses like, “uzuthi kuMiss wakho ndiza kumphoxa emana endibiza nje” [Tell your...
teacher I will snub her if she keeps calling me to the school]. The teachers have come up with a new strategy that works. If they need to see a parent, they ask another child who lives in the same area to go and either delivers a letter to the parent or tell her/him teacher so and so would like to see her.

5.9.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.  
Have you received any training in working with parents?

Response:
None of the teachers had received any training or skills in working with the parents because this was not a requirement in the curriculum of teacher training.

5.9.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.

What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:
• Some parents quarrel in front of the children and while that is traumatic to the children on the one hand, on the other hand it causes disciplinary problems in class. Bullying of some by others is encouraged by such behaviour.
• Some parents abuse alcohol and their children are born with learning problems and disabilities. That causes a problem for the child in class.
That is evidenced by some 14 year olds who are still in grade three in the school.

- Parents face a big challenge with HIV/AIDS. There are 14-15 year olds who are HIV positive. Their parents are also positive. Some children go out over weekends and some have a number of boyfriends.
- There is a public library very close to the school, but the learners of the school do not take advantage of it.
- There is poverty as a result of a high rate of unemployment. Most parents depend on the R170 a month grant.
- Crime. Vandalism. Theft. That is attributed to the fact that the majority of learners come from the nearby informal settlements.
- Drug and substance abuse. Some learners experimented with sniffing paint while the school was being painted. On Mondays it is easy to see which learners abused alcohol at the weekend.
- Some learners bunk classes and hide in the toilets during class time.
- Those who bring lunch to school, it gets eaten by other bullies.
- The pregnancy rate is high…14 and 15 year olds get pregnant.

5.10 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW NINE: TEACHERS OF HORSERADISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six teachers - two males and four females. One of the females was the deputy principal. Their ages ranged between late twenties or early thirties and mid- or late fifties. Four were post level two teachers while the other two were post level one teachers. The atmosphere was cordial despite the fact that two days later the teachers were going to embark on a countrywide teacher strike over salary increases.

The interviews took place in the principal’s office. It was quiet except for the phone that rang twice but was ignored.

After I explained the purpose of my visit and thanked the teachers for making the time to see me, I explained that they were free to express themselves either in IsiXhosa or English - whichever they felt comfortable with. The interviews were
conducted mainly in IsiXhosa. I assured them of the confidentiality of the interview and to that end, did not want them to introduce themselves by name. After they consented to my using the tape recorder to capture the interview, the interview started.

5.10.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:

- Parents of the school are involved in that when there is a problem they help. One got a sponsor to buy a photocopying machine for the school. Before that, the same parent would make photocopies of schoolwork at her workplace.
- Although they are said to be involved generally but this year (It is two days before the end of May) they have not been seen anywhere near the school. The school has had no event that needs their participation, “no activity that needs them”. They are going to be needed to raise funds for an oncoming event.
- The teachers do not expect parents to be 100% involved.
- Some children live with their grandparents while their mothers live with their boyfriends. Teachers do not expect grandmothers to be involved. Some live with extended family members because the parents are dead. Relatives are not as committed to the child’s education as the parent would be.
- There are learners whose parents both drink and they don’t involve themselves in the child’s education. They just send them to school.
- Some mothers are young. They are children themselves. They see no need to involve themselves in school.
5.10.2 Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.  
Do parents attend these meetings?

Response:  
Yes, about 70% of the parents of the school attend meetings. There seems to be a misunderstanding among parents about attendance at meetings. Some are willing to attend meetings, while others do not see the need. Children were said to be embarrassed that their parents do not attend meetings.

5.10.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.  
Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Response:  
• The general feeling was that kunzima ke apho [it is difficult there]. Only about 2% of the parents pay school fees.  
• Parents are not employed and so have no money to pay the school.  
• Those who have the money to pay school fees do not do it because they heard in the media that they don’t have to pay school fees.  
• Parents don’t know how to raise funds. They want teachers to lead them. They can’t initiate ideas. They need to be taught how to raise funds.

5.10.4 Question Four: Parent involvement at home

Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.
Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Response:
There is no sign of parent involvement at home. In no way do parents their children with schoolwork at home, not even with homework.

5.10.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.

How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:
Letters and notices are sent home with the learners but there is rarely any response to those. Learners are also asked to convey messages to the parents but that also does not seem to help much.

5.10.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

Have you received any training in working with parents?

Response:
None of the teachers received training in working with parents.

5.10.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the
problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.

What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:

• Discipline and teachers need the parents to help. Learners are influenced a lot by the environment. There are some who do drugs. Some carry dangerous weapons to school.

• The language the children use is rude. Some parents swear at the children. The children imitate the language because they see nothing wrong with it.

• Parents do not value education. They do not see why it is important.

• Absenteeism is a problem. Parents sit with their children at home and not ask them why they do not go to school. They leave it to children to decide whether to go to school or not. Some parents do not provide the needs of the school. They don’t look after the children.

• Some children never do their homework and parents never sign the homework book. That means they never look at the children’s books because abahoyi [they don’t care].

• Parents need to know that children are required to do some research at home with their help. But they don’t help them.

• HIV/AIDS infected and affected children pose a big challenge. There are teachers who have been allocated to look after such children.

• Teachers do not feel safe in that environment because it is corrupt. One teacher’s cellular telephone was stolen in the classroom allegedly by one of the parents who come to fetch their children at the end of the school day. Another incident was of a parent who came to beat up one of the teachers because of what her child had said without even verifying it with the teacher. The other teachers had to help the teacher.
5.11  FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TEN: TEACHERS OF CHURCH STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of three female teachers because it was break time and the other teachers had gone to buy themselves lunch. Only the three were available although I had requested to see six. I continued with the three.

Two were coloured and one was black. One was in her middle age while the other two were young. The coloured middle-aged teacher did most of the talking while the other two nodded in agreement on most issues she raised. The young coloured did not talk. Although I had made clear that they were free to respond either in IsiXhosa or English, the black one seemed to be struggling with the English she chose to use and as a result said very little.

I thanked them for their time and assured them of the confidentiality of the interview.

5.11.1  Question One: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children

You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Response:
The teachers were satisfied that the parents of the school are involved in the school and in all school activities. When there is a problem parents are sent for and they respond by coming to listen to the problem. The children are well fed and well dressed and neat.

5.11.2  Question Two: Attendance of parent meetings

In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.
**Do parents attend these meetings?**

Response:
Teachers were satisfied with the way the parents attended meetings, both as a group and as individuals when called for a specific problem related to the child. The school has a PTA and attendance at PTA meetings is always 100%. Meetings are held on Sunday afternoons. Teachers keep a register of parent attendance. Those who for some reason or another cannot attend a meeting on a Sunday, come during the week to get an update on the meeting.

5.11.3 **Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations**

*For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.*

**Do parents meet their financial obligations?**

Response:
Parents of the school meet their financial obligations. The ones who do not pay just can't afford to pay at the time the money is required, but by the end of the year they have met their obligations. All the parents support the school. They don't neglect the school. It is a private school, so teachers get paid out of school fund. They were paid regularly.

5.11.4 **Question Four: Parent involvement at home**

*Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects and research projects in which they need the assistance of parents.*

**Is there any evidence of parent involvement at home?**

Response:
Support from the parents is 100%. Children are helped with their homework and other projects that need the assistance of a parent. The parents are willing to assist.
Now and then activity books are sent home and parents sign and date the books and return them to the school. They also sign the homework books. Sometimes parents phone the teacher and ask how their child is doing.

5.11.5 Question Five: Communication with parents

Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.

How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?

Response:
Parents come personally to school or send a letter or phone the school. The teachers do the same.

5.11.6 Question Six: Training in parental involvement

For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.

Have you received any training in working with parents?

Response:
Although none of the teachers had received formal training or skills on how to work with parents, they seemed quite comfortable involving them in school.

5.11.7 Question Seven: Challenges facing the teacher

The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.
What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?

Response:

• Their greatest challenge is space. The school has grown in numbers so much that it cannot accommodate the learners.
• Resources are not sufficient for each learner. With OBE there are no reading books anymore. Teachers compile their own readers and set up a library for their classes especially in lower grades where teachers recognize that learners have to do a lot of reading.
• Teachers admitted that they do not have a problem with discipline.

5.12 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

With regard to the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children, the finding was that parents generally do not involve themselves in the education of their children. Reasons cited for non-involvement include work commitments, lack of interest in education, failure to see the rationale for involving themselves, to name but a few. The exception is Church Street Primary School where parents were said to be fully involved. It also emanated from the interviews that some teachers do not expect parents to be involved in school activities. Because parents are illiterate, teachers do not see the rationale for involving them because they supposedly have nothing to contribute.

When teachers were asked whether parents attend parent meetings, the finding was that attendance of parent meetings is very poor because parents do not prioritise school meetings. Although work commitments were cited as reasons for not attending meetings, the reality is that even if the school schedules meetings at times that would suit most parents, they still do not attend. Unemployed parents also do not attend meetings. It was found that parents still think in the past when their parents were not expected to be involved.

Responding to the question on whether parents meet their financial obligations, findings from interviews with teachers are similar to findings from interviews with
principals. Parents generally do not pay school fees. They do not involve themselves in fundraising activities. Foster parents and parents who get a child grant from the government also do not contribute anything to the schools; whether in cash or in kind. Schools face a big challenge in this area because no school can function effectively without financial resources. The only exception is Church Street Primary School where learners who cannot afford school fees are paid for by sponsors that are organized by the school.

When teachers were asked to comment on the evidence of parental involvement at home, the finding was that there was no evidence of involvement of parents at home. Instead, teachers see a relationship between the problems they encounter with the learners at school with the home conditions. Teachers believe that parents do not reinforce the discipline that they (teachers) inculcate at school. The exception was Church Street Primary School where teachers said parents are as involved at home as they should. Parents sign homework books and assist with homework and projects.

Teachers were also asked to comment on whether their training at university or college equipped them sufficiently to work with the parents and involve them in their programmes. Almost all the groups indicated that they received no such training from their pre-service training at the HEI and also no in-service training from the DoE. The few that indicated some form of training in parental involvement commented that the information they received did not equip them for the kind of child that they deal with on a day-to-day basis because that information has become obsolete.

Teachers were asked to comment on the challenges that negatively impact and retard the school’s core business of teaching and learning. The finding was that teachers are faced with so many challenges that include discipline problems, vandalism in schools, poverty and lack of resources, over-crowded classrooms, and poor parental support.

The next chapter looks at findings from focus group interviews with learners.
CHAPTER SIX
FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH LEARNERS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Focus group interviews were conducted with the learners of the 10 selected schools in the Port Elizabeth district to investigate the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children as envisaged by the SASA of 1996. In Chapter Three, theoretical underpinnings of the focus group interview were discussed at length and that discussion will not be resumed in this chapter. The rationale for conducting focus group interviews for this particular study was spelt out and will not be repeated in this chapter. In this chapter findings obtained through focus group interviews with the learners will be discussed.

Entrenched in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution is the Right to Learn. It is therefore the right of every child in South Africa to receive an education until age fifteen or grade nine. Coupled with that is the requirement that parents be involved in the education of their children, not only as the SGB, but also as individuals. Parents are the primary educators of the child and that responsibility does not end when the child starts school.

Focus group interviews were conducted with the learners in the following schools:

- Shoulders High School
- Knowledge High school
- Revelation High School
- Kickoff High School
- Build It High School.
- Shushu Primary School
- Woodbundle Primary school
- Charlie Pride Primary School
- Horseradish Primary School
- Church Street Primary School.
Findings from each focus group are discussed hereunder. The location and environment of each school has been described in Chapter Four and will not be repeated here.

6.2 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW ONE: LEARNERS OF SHOULders HIGH SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six learners - three girls and three boys all in their final year of study (grade twelve). All six were in the middle class SES which is far from representative of the student population which had been described earlier by the teachers as consisting of 90% of learners from the informal settlements.

Of the nine learners, 70% of them either did not live with their parents or they hardly saw them even at weekends because of work commitments. About 22% of the respondents had a close relative who lived in some suburb in town. This came up when they discussed the availability of study resources and facilities at home. One said, “when there is too much noise at home, I go to my sister’s place in Overbaakens”. Another said, "I go to my aunt’s home in town which is much quieter than home".

All were impeccably dressed in school uniform. They all had extras, like beautiful wristwatches, and girls had gold shiny earrings and nylon stockings. They spoke well and were free in expressing their feelings. They all had a good command of both IsiXhosa and English. This fact made me suspect that they could have attended primary school at some former Model C school before they came to Shoulders High School.

The interview took place in the deputy principal’s office who was in class at the time. The office was well lit and comfortable. I assured the respondents of the confidentiality of the interview and obtained their permission to capture the interview on the tape recorder. I informed them that they were free to use either IsiXhosa or English - whichever they felt comfortable using. The responses were in both languages. The atmosphere was cordial. There were no disturbances.
6.2.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

*The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school.*

*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?*

Response:
The learners felt that there is an SGB in the school who represents the parents so there is no need for parents to involve themselves individually. They felt that it is logical that the parents cannot all be involved. They were quite happy that their parents were not individually involved.

6.2.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?*

Response:
• Most learners do not live with their parents because of work commitments especially those who stay in. They only come home at weekends when the learners also need to go and study with friends.
• There are parents, especially mothers, who were said to help with homework.
• Parents pay school fees and buy textbooks and other extra books to help especially in Mathematics.
• Some parents come home late and cannot help the children.
• One parent works and lives in London.
• More than 68% of the learners interviewed stay with their grandmothers who are not even expected to help in any way.
• One learner admitted to being lazy to study so she does not care whether there is a place to study or not.
• Two learners have relatives in town so when it gets too noisy at their homes, they go to study in those relatives’ places.
• For learners who admitted that there is no demarcated place for them to study at home, they study in the bedroom, dining room or in the lounge where it is not always quiet. One learner said he woke up at two in the
morning when it was very quiet with everybody asleep, and studied in the dining room.

6.2.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?

Response:
Learners admitted that their parents attend meetings only when it is possible for them to do so because most of the time they are at work.

6.2.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?

Response:
• Most parents pay the school fees at the end of the year just to get the reports, which are withheld for students who have not paid.
• Parents pay because the school devised a strategy of punishing the learners to get parents to pay.
• Learners think it is unfair to expect them to pay school fees when they are expected to also bring a ream of duplicating paper.
• Some learners admitted to not paying school fees because their parents depend on the government grant, so they don't have money to pay school fees. The teachers are accused of not understanding this. This is interpreted by learners as victimization.

6.2.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:
• All the learners interviewed said communication between home and school is one sided - the school contacts the home through notices and
letters given to learners to deliver to parents and never the other way round.

- The learners decide whether the letter or notice should be delivered or not, depending on the content. If it is going to get them into trouble, they do not deliver it. In essence this means the learners open the letters and read them. Parents never get to know that the school was reaching out to them.

6.2.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners

*What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?*

Response:

- Security against unwanted tsotsis who enter the school through a hole that they opened in the fence during break and rob learners of their money. The tsotsis commit a lot of crime and sometimes the police have to be called in. Fortunately the police come when they are called.

- Drugs. The tsotsis bring drugs to school. After break, some learners are behaving differently and strangely. Some learners smoke dagga.

- Learners have a problem with teachers who send them out of class when they have done something wrong. They interpret this as victimization.

6.3 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TWO: LEARNERS OF KNOWLEDGE HIGH SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of seven learners, four girls and three boys. They were all dressed in school uniform and one boy and one girl were members of the SGB. They were all in grade eleven as the grade twelves were engaged elsewhere.

6.3.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

*The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school.*

*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?*
Response:
Parents were said to buy their children books, pay school fees and buy them uniform. Other than that they did not involve themselves.

6.3.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:
• Parents never look at their children’s schoolbooks or ask them how their day was or how was school.
• They never once come to school and ask the teachers how the children are doing.
• Learners wonder if their parents are interested in their (children’s) education because they never motivate them. One learner said her mother just says, “Akuqalwa kufundwa ngawe” [you are not the first person ever to study].
• There is a lot of noise from the younger siblings, making studying impossible.
• Some learners are never given time to study because they have to do their usual chores even during examinations time.
• Some learners are not allowed to study in the library even though there are free study guides there. They don’t allow their children to go and study with friends for fear that they might engage in some form of mischief.

6.3.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?

Response:
• Parents make excuses of being tired or busy if the meeting is called on a Sunday to accommodate working parents.
• Learners made an observation that when their parents are invited to a parents’ meeting, they will say they cannot come because they are
working, but when they need to pay the school fees then they will say they are not working. The learners also observed that the parents want them to pass at the end of the year

• Learners observe that that their parents just do not care [abakhathali].

6.3.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?

Response:

• More than 80% of the parents of the school do not meet their financial obligations because most say they are unemployed. The children observe that even those parents who are employed do not pay school fees because they do not see the need. Learners described them as “abakhathali” [they do not care].

• Learners also contribute to non-payment of school fees by deciding themselves whether parents should pay or not.

6.3.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:

• The school communicates with the parents by sending letters or notices with the learners. Verbal invitations are also given through the learners.

• By their own admission the letters and notices do not always get delivered depending what the contents of the message are about. If there is suspicion that the letter is a reminder about school fees then it does not get delivered because in most cases the money has been used up for other purposes and never reaches the school. Both school and parent never find out because the parents do not come to the school and they never demand a receipt.
• When the school sends a learner home to fetch a parent, learners make excuses for them (parents) because they know they have done something bad and do not want their parents to find out.

• The school phones when there is an emergency, for example, a learner falls ill or when a learner has done something really bad.

6.3.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:

• Learners feel that they live in two different worlds - their homes and their school. Parents do not know what goes on in the school and teachers do not know or do not care what happens at the learners’ homes.

• Learners accuse parents of not responding when teachers ask for their help. It was alleged that they were once asked by the teachers to come and clean the school and cut the grass. They never came. The teachers also never invite parents when the learners are going out on sporting activities.

6.4 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW THREE: LEARNERS OF REVELATION HIGH SCHOOL

The group consisted of six learners - two from grade ten, two from grade eleven and two from grade twelve. There were three boys and three girls all neatly dressed in school uniform. The atmosphere was cordial. The interviews were conducted in the teachers’ staff room. After assuring them of the confidentiality of the interview and thanking them for their participation, we proceeded with the interview, which was conducted in isiXhosa.

6.4.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school.
In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?

Response:
• Parents of Revelation High School do not voluntarily involve themselves in any school activities except when invited to do so by the teachers.
• The learners feel that the SGB is there to represent their parents, work with the school, solve problems and take decisions.

6.4.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:
• Learners feel that when parents are not educated, they have no capacity to involve themselves in their (children’s) education. However, the only area in which their involvement is appreciated by the learners is in IsiXhosa lessons. The parents were said to have grown up in the rural areas and understand the culture of amaXhosa.
• There are parents who make space to study when it is examinations time and make sure that the younger siblings do not make a noise.
• Although parents may not be educated, they encourage their children to be mature and independent.
• Parents are concerned about the safety and security of their children at school and caution them to keep safe at school.
• The neighbours also take interest in the progress of the children of their community at school (even if they do not themselves have a child in the school). They ask the learners about school and praise/congratulate them when they do well. There is a support group for needy children in the community.

6.4.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?
Response:
Parents attend meetings when they can. However, when they cannot, they ask the neighbours and friends to attend on their behalf.

6.4.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?

Response:
Parents pay school fees when they can afford it. Learners feel that their parents are justified not to pay school fees because the school demands a lot of money and not inform the parents how the money is used.

6.4.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:
Both school and home send messages - written and verbal - through the learners.

6.4.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:
• Safety and security in school and on the way to and from school is lacking. Learners get robbed of their money on their way to school in the mornings.
• Some learners have friends in the township and the friends come to visit them in school bringing drugs and selling them in school.
6.5 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW FOUR: LEARNERS OF KICKOFF HIGH SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six learners - three girls and three boys. Four were in grade twelve while the other two were in grade eleven. They were all smartly dressed in school uniform and were very outspoken about issues they felt strongly about. Two were members of the SGB.

The area in which the school is situated is upper middle class populated by professional people. The six students come from such families. The school itself is mainly populated by learners from informal settlements - some of which are very far away from the school.

The interview took place in the office adjoining the principal’s. There were a few disturbances with some teachers going past into the principal’s office. We had to make way for them.

After thanking the learners for their time and assuring them of the confidentiality of the interview, the interview started. I told them that they could use either IsiXhosa or English - whatever language they were comfortable in. The responses were mainly in IsiXhosa with a word or two of English thrown in. The atmosphere was cordial.

6.5.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

*The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school.*
*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?*

Response:
Parents of this school are not involved in school activities. The SGB members attend meetings but most parents of the school do not. As a result of that they do not know what the school requires.
6.5.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:

• Parents do not understand things their children do at school so they cannot help but they do help in areas where they are competent. Some help with research topics the learners do not know about.
• Working parents cannot help because they do not have the time.
• Some learners live with their grandmothers who cannot help with school work.
• One parent encourages her child to study from Monday to Thursday and gets her information on the topics given.
• One parent was said to supervise homework and that parent also gives her child money to pay for Saturday extra classes.
• Learners who come from the informal settlements walk home four kilometres (from the school) and when they get home they have to cook, clean the house, wash dishes and help younger siblings with homework. School is far and when they get home they are too tired to do homework. They only do it when they get to school in the morning. Some don’t do it at all. Some just copy the homework from others and when a test is written, they fail.
• Some learners from the informal settlements have dropped out of school because they get robbed on their way to school. Some are encouraged by their parents to drop out.

6.5.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?

Response:

• When told that parents were invited to the school, one parent responded thus, “Hay’ suka ndifuna ntoni kwesiya sikolo”? [Get away; what do I want from that school?]
At the beginning of the year learners are given letters to take home detailing the requirements of the school but learners don’t deliver the letters. If there is a return slip, some learners simply forge the parents’ signature because they don’t want parents to come to the school lest they find out about things they (learners) get up to in school and vice versa. Some of the things that they get up to by their admission include:
- staying away from school for a whole week without their parents knowing about it;
- naughtiness;
- failure to do school work as required by teachers;
- failure to submit assignments;
- lying about exam results, for example, some are still in grade nine when their parents think they are in grade twelve;
- lying about money that the school requires. They inflate school fees and take advantage that their parents will never find out.

Some parents are unemployed and only have disability grant money. Their children become ashamed of them and go and live with a relative who is better off than the parent but who will not attend any of the school meetings. Some live with aunts and uncles.

Some learners never bring their parents to fetch their reports in June and in December. They hire any “parent” from the street.

Some learners boast of their homes and are reluctant to bring their parents lest other learners find out that the parents are not what they are made out to be. This is more prevalent from learners who come from the informal settlements.

Some parents live out of town and only come home occasionally.

6.5.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?

Response:
- Learners responded that there are parents who pay school fees while others don’t.
• Boyfriends pay their girlfriends’ fees but when they split, they stop paying, leaving the learner stranded.

6.5.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:
Letters are given to learners but they never get delivered to parents unless the learner is aware and approves of the contents of the letter.

6.5.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:
The following were some of the challenges identified:
• Peer pressure and being sexually active and falling pregnant, including grade sevens. They don’t see falling pregnant as wrong or a disgrace.
• Failure to value education. Some don’t see the point in coming to school. Some say if they fail they will drop out.
• Some take drugs; some smoke; some sell drugs in the school.
• Overcrowding in classrooms resulting in the shy learners not making a contribution for fear of being laughed at if they should make a mistake.
• A number of students are HIV positive. When they get sick, they drop out of school. Fifty percent drop out because of pregnancy and the other 50% drop out because of their poor background. Some live with their grannies and share a room with six or seven other siblings.
• Some learners engage in prostitution to make a living. They are tired in the morning and have not done their homework.
• Some are paid for by their boyfriends. When they split, they drop out of school.
Those who walk to school have their money and cell phones snatched by robbers.

Girls smoke which is frowned upon in the culture of amaXhosa

Some learners bunk school because they have no intention of finishing school. They just wait for the fun of the matriculation dance and drop out immediately after that.

6.6 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW FIVE: LEARNERS OF BUILD IT HIGH SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six learners - three girls and three boys. Three were in grade ten and another three in grade eleven. The grade twelves was not available as they were busy on some project. All six were neatly dressed in full school uniform.

The interview was held in the teachers’ staff room where there is a Coca-Cola vending machine. The school had more than one teachers’ staff room and it seemed to me that they hardly used this one. It is a spare staffroom. It was relatively quiet except for once or twice learners, sent by teachers, came to buy cool drink from the vending machine.

The atmosphere was cordial. After thanking them for their time, I assured them of the confidentiality of the interview. I was conscious of the fact that it was a Friday and on that day school breaks earlier and learners would not like to be kept for longer than was necessary.

I explained to the learners that they were free to respond either in isiXhosa or English - whichever they felt comfortable in. They mostly responded in isiXhosa.

6.6.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school. In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?
Response:

- Some parents do attend meetings when the school invites them.
- They pay school fees.
- They buy uniform.
- They make sure that learners do their homework.
- An insignificant few come to school to see how their children are doing.

6.6.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:

- Most learners find it difficult to study at home because of the loud music that siblings play. Many resort to studying at a relative’s place where is quieter.
- Most admitted to having no designated place to study at home. As a result of that, 63% of the participants admitted to studying in the sitting room.

6.6.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?

Response:

- About 25% of the parents attend meetings. Those who are employed sometimes cannot find anybody in the community to represent them at the meetings.
- Learners admitted to playing a role in their parents not attending meetings. They do not always give their parents invitation letters or notices of meetings. Some claim to forget while others admitted to doing it deliberately, in case the parents get to know the mischief the learners get into at school.
One reason parents do not attend meetings is that *abakhathali* [they do not care].

### 6.6.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*Do your parents pay school fees?*

Response:

- Parents do give their children money to pay the school fees but by the learners’ own admission, the money never gets paid in because it gets used for other things. Some said they replace it with their pocket money when they can.
- Learners said the parents would readily pay if they (parents) knew how the money was going to be used. The implication is that learners do not see how the money is used so they decide to help themselves to it. It also implies that they want to be involved in the decisions pertaining to budgeting. There are learners who are part of the SGB.
- Some parents buy stationery when the school demands it.

### 6.6.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

*How does your school communicate with your parents?*

Response:

Letters and notices are sent home with the learners but the intended recipients do not always get the correspondence.

### 6.7 Focus Group Interview Six: Learners of Shushu Primary School

The group consisted of six learners, two from grade five, two from grade six and two from grade seven. The interview took place in the deputy principal’s office where it was quiet. The atmosphere was cordial and the interviewees were relaxed.
After assuring them of the confidentiality of the interview and thanking them for their time, I asked for permission to capture the interview on tape and permission was granted.

6.7.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school. In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?

Response:

- Parents of this school are not involved in school activities because they claim that “iyasebenzisa laa nto” [that thing involves a lot of work]. Learners perceive their parents to be lazy and influence each other.
- The SGB was said not to function at all. Learners claim not to see them at all in school. Learners accuse the SGB of never coming to see what the school needs. Learners feel that parents can look after the school but they don’t; as a result the school gets vandalized. Learners admit that the caretaker cannot be everywhere simultaneously and needs the help of parents.
- Parents were said not to find reason to visit the school during school hours. Learners observe that their school is filthy, but parents never volunteer their services to come and clean the school or to paint or work in the school garden. The fencing sags in places but parents never volunteer to come and fix it. The school has to hire people to do it. The learners further observed that some parents are unemployed but they don’t come to help in the school.
- Parents are required to fetch the children’s progress reports but they don’t do it if they suspect that their child has failed.
- The only time parents show up voluntarily is when their child has done wrong and they fear that the child will be dismissed.
- The only other time parents come to this school is to fight with the teachers. They don’t come even if their child is not doing well. They were accused by the learners as valuing their work more than they value their child’s school.
6.7.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:

- The learners said their parents do not involve themselves in their own work at home because they do not have the time because of work commitments. Learners interpret this to mean that work comes first and school last.
- Parents were accused of expecting learners to do home chores with no consideration for school work that needs to be done at home. This includes examinations periods.
- Some parents were said to be illiterate and are not even expected to help with school matters. Learners admitted that they do not even ask.
- Some learners admitted that they cannot study at home because of the noise from television and radio. They have to wait until everybody is asleep to do their work. This happens at examinations time as well. The result is that they do not get enough sleep because they have to wake up early.
- Parents were accused of not even enquiring after the child’s day at school.
- It did upset one learner that her mother expected her to wash her own feet because she (mother) was tired from work. The learner feels that parents do not even think that children get tired too.
- Parents do not allow children to study at a friend’s house because they (parents) do not trust that the children will do what they say they are going to do. They think that the children will get into some mischief.

6.7.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?
Response:
Learners estimated that only about 20% of parents turn up for meetings. They (parents) were said to be committed at work and cannot make the time to come to school.

6.7.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?

Response:

• Parents of the school do not pay school fees because they claim that they do not have money. The learners admitted that parents never come to the principal to explain that they cannot pay. They (parents) fear being scolded by teachers who talk to them as if they are talking to young children. Some parents admit to fearing talking to educated people.

• Some parents only pay school fees when examinations are going to be written and they fear that they may not get the children’s progress reports.

• Some parents cannot pay school fees because they are unemployed and also illiterate. The ones who live in rented properties have to pay rent so school fees is not a priority.

• Some parents have children at university and cannot pay the school and the university.

• Some parents give the children money to pay it in at school, but the money never reaches the school. Most parents never get to know that the money was not paid in. They do not follow up.

• Some parents promise to pay but don’t honour their promises.

6.7.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:

• The school communicates through the learners by giving them letters and notices. Parents do not trust the letters if they do not have school stamp.
• Whether the letter is delivered or not depends on the contents of the letter. If the learner suspects that the letter is calling the parent to the school because of some wrong doing by the learner, then the letter does not get delivered because it spells trouble for the learner.

• Teachers were accused of not visiting the learners at their homes when they were sick or to find out why they were not going to school anymore.

• Learners told of learners who dropped out of school a long time ago but their parents were not aware of it because they (parents) leave before the children wake up and come home long after school. Teachers do not bother to contact the parent. Asked how they know all this they said the meet the drop-outs in the township.

6.7.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners.

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:
• A few of the learners were perturbed that their parents do not come to watch them on sports days and encourage them. They feel that if parents knew how they (children) were performing in sport, they would be willing to buy them running shoes or corks and support their training.

• Learners felt that their school would be safe from vandalism which took place from time to time if the parents played a role in securing the school.

6.8 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SEVEN: LEARNERS OF WOODBUNDLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six learners, two from grade six and four from grade seven. There were two boys and four girls. They ranged in age from 11 to 14 years. They were all neatly dressed in school uniform. All contributed to the interview.

The interviews were held in the computer room during break time. Because it was break time, the rest of the learners were playing outside and making so much noise
that the tape recording was inaudible and distorted. To transcribe the interview, I relied heavily on the notes taken during the interview.

After I assured the interviewees of the confidentiality of the interview, I obtained permission from them to capture the interview on tape and it was granted.

I explained that the responses could either be in IsiXhosa or English, whichever they were comfortable with. The responses were in IsiXhosa. The interview started.

6.8.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

*The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school.*

*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?*

Response:

- Parents of the school do not involve themselves much in school activities. They do not know much what happens in school. They rely on their children to get information about what happens in school.
- Learners claim that their parents do not even come to school when invited to unless there is a big problem like when a child has got himself or herself into trouble.
- They do not come to watch their children play sport or sing in the choir.
- Parents of the school do not help with the cleaning of the school nor help in the garden project which benefits their children.
- Parents of the school never show up even when invited.

6.8.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?*

Response:

- On the whole parents of the school do not help their children with homework or projects they children are given at school. They claim that
they do not have the knowledge of what goes on in school. However they do ask a relative or a friend in the neighbourhood to help the children.

• The interviewees claimed that their parents do not provide them with a demarcated place for study, nor do they make sure that the environment is conducive to learning, like switching off the radio or television.
• Learners claimed that their parents do not check their books because they are not educated.
• Most learners live with their grandmothers who are illiterate and are not expected to help anyway.

6.8.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

*When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?*

Response:
• Very few parents attend parent meetings. They claim to be engaged at work and cannot make the time although most of them are unemployed anyway.
• Some parents just do not want to go near the school because they think they will be asked to pay school fees. They claim to have heard on radio that they don’t have to pay school fees.

6.8.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*Do your parents pay school fees?*

Response:
• The majority of the parents do not pay school fees because they are unemployed and cannot afford it (although they claim to be working when they are required to attend parent meetings).
• Parents who get the government child support grant also do not pay school fees. Learners claim that the grant money gets spent on liquor.
• Some parents just do not want to pay and no reason is given. They get irritated when asked for money.
6.8.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:

• The school sends letters and notices home through the learners.
• Communication with the school is one-sided. Parents find no reason to communicate with the school. They are at the receiving end of the communication.
• Some children don’t give parents the letters.
• Some parents trust that other parents will tell them what was said at the meeting. They follow up by going to the neighbour the next day to find out what was said at the meeting.
• Some parents delegate a brother or a sister to the meetings.

6.8.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:

The school gets broken into and the learners of the school are directly or indirectly involved. They either break in themselves or they inform friends in the township what the school has that can be stolen.

6.9 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW EIGHT: LEARNERS OF CHARLIE PRIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six learners from grades six and grade seven - three girls and three boys. All were prefects and very neatly dressed in school uniform. The prefect system is outlawed in the country and was replaced by the Learner Representative Council (LRC), which forms part of the SGB. However primary schools do not have LRCs because the children are deemed too young to be part of governance of a school so they retain the prefect system. The six learners spoke
with such authority and confidence for their age that it was no wonder they were prefects. One lives in a children’s home with over 60 “brothers and sisters” and “mother” and was the smartest dressed of all, complete with a hairpiece which she said was donated to the centre by one of the shops in town. One had been chosen by Port Elizabeth district to compete for admission to the Oprah Winfrey School for girls in Johannesburg but was unsuccessful. They expressed themselves in both English and IsiXhosa. They all came from good homes, not typical township homes. The school is in the township and is situated behind a community hall.

The interviews took place in the principal’s office. The respondents were relaxed and free in expressing themselves. After assuring them of the confidentiality of the interview, I obtained their permission to capture the interview on tape, which was granted. I thanked them for their willingness to participate in the interview.

6.9.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school. In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?

Response:
• Parents are not involved in school. Learners claim that their parents do not even come to school to watch them play sport, or clean the school on Fridays or help when the toilets are blocked.
• Learners made the observation that parents run away from responsibility [abakhathali].

6.9.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:
• Less than 20% of the parents help their children with homework. Learners admitted to sometimes asking a relative, a neighbour or an older sibling to help.
Learners lie about homework and claim they were not given any because they are lazy to do it. The laziness is also fuelled by teachers who do not do a follow up on the work they gave by not looking to see whether the work was done or not.

Some parents complain that *yhu ininzi ihomework siyadikwa* [wow, there is too much homework; we are tired of it]. The amount of homework given is perceived by parents as unnecessarily overloading them with too much work.

About 30% of the parents ensure that their children have a demarcated place to study at home. Those who do not have a demarcated place study in the lounge where everybody is watching television or listening to the radio.

Caring uneducated parents and grandmothers ask neighbours or friends or relatives to check their children’s books and sign them.

The people who help with homework are mainly mothers and brothers, not fathers.

6.9.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

*When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?*

Response:

- In one class of thirty four learners, between two and ten parents attend grade meetings. They claim to be scared of what will be said in the meeting.

- There are parents who do not attend meetings because they just don’t like meetings.

- There are parents who don’t come to meetings because their children don’t want them to. They (learners) anticipate that teachers will tell parents things that that they (learners) get up to in school.

- An observation was made by one of the learners that some parents claim to be scared to ask for time off from their employers to attend parent meetings but they find it easy to ask for time off when they want to attend a wedding or some other party.
Some parents stay away from meetings for fear of being asked to pay school fees. They claim to have heard on radio that they don't have to pay school fees.

6.9.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?

Response:

- Parents do not pay school fees because they are unemployed and cannot afford it.
- Parents who get the government child support grant also do not pay school fees. Learners claim that the grant money gets spent on liquor.
- Some parents just do not want to pay and no reason is given. They get irritated when asked for money.

6.9.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:

- The school sends letters and notices home through the learners.
- The grade sevens takes exception to being given letters and notices. They feel that they can just be trusted to tell their parents what the school requires.
- Communication with the school is one sided. Parents find no reason to communicate with the school. They are at the receiving end of the communication.
- Some parents get fed up with the communication and remarks like “Sis’ esi sikolo sinikezela qho ileta. Andizukuza apho” [with disdain. This school always sends letters. I am not going there], or Soze ndincame ubuthongo bam ndiye esikolweni [I cannot give up my sleep and go to school] are not uncommon.
- Some children don’t give parents the letters.
• Some parents trust that other parents will tell them what was said at the meeting. They follow up by going to the neighbour the next day to find out what was said at the meeting.
• Some parents delegate a brother or a sister to the meetings.

6.9.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:
• The school gets broken into and the learners of the school are directly or indirectly involved. They either break in themselves or they inform friends in the township what the school has that can be stolen.
• Grade sevens were said to be corrupt. When they come late to school, they don't walk in through the gate. They opened a hole in the fence and use that entrance.

6.10 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW NINE: LEARNERS OF HORSERADISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The focus group consisted of six learners – one from grade six, one from grade seven, two from grade eight and two from grade nine. The grade six one hardly contributed any information as she had her mouth covered because she was embarrassed or irritated by a cold sore. There were five girls and one boy.

The interviews took place in the principal's office where it was quiet except for the phone that rang unattended a few times.

I assured the respondents that whatever transpired during the interviews would be treated in the strictest confidence. I obtained permission from them to use the tape recorder to capture the interview and it was granted. I indicated that they were free to use either isiXhosa or English -whatever they were comfortable with.
Soon after the interviews started, it became evident that the respondents were well aware of what I was going to ask and gave me the answers before I asked the questions. I assumed that either the principal or the teachers that I had already interviewed “prepared” them for the interview. That shortened the interview and rendered it boring.

6.10.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school. In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?

Response:
Parents look after the school and make sure that there are no break-ins or burglaries.

6.10.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:
• Parents buy their children uniforms (no other responses were forthcoming).
• They also sign the homework book and help with research work at home, for example, the family tree.

6.10.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?

Response:
Parents of the school cannot attend meetings because they have work commitments.

6.10.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?
Response:
Parents do not pay school fees because they are not working. However learners lie to their parents and say the school needs money for this and that and when they are given the money; they use it for other things.

6.10.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:
Parents send letters home with the learners but the parents do not always receive the letters by the learners’ admission.

6.10.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners.

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:
• Learners were said to be naughty and they don’t fear the teachers. When parents are called to the school, those learners don’t want their parents to come because they don’t want them (parents) to hear about things they (learners) do at school.
• Late coming to school. Some learners come late to school and others bunk school.
• Theft of school property like taps, and door latches. Windows and doors are vandalized.
• Low literacy levels. Some learners in grade nine can’t read IsiXhosa or English. They don’t buy books although they are given the money to do so. They just use the money for other things and end up without stationery.
• Some boys smoke and abuse drugs. The learners cannot tell the teachers for fear of being punished.
6.11 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TEN: WITH LEARNERS OF CHURCH STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

The group consisted of six learners - five girls and one boy. One boy and one girl were wearing prefect badges. Two were in grade five, two in grade six and two in grade seven. The boy was in grade seven. Of the six, three did most of the talking. They were very confident of themselves. The other three either had nothing to say or they were dominated by the three. I encouraged them to talk but nothing much came out except one awkward sentence on any one issue. All six were neatly dressed in school uniform.

After introducing myself and thanking them for their time, I assured them of the confidentiality of the interview. I asked them if they had a problem with me tape-recording the interview. They said no. I told them they could speak in IsiXhosa or English - whichever they preferred. They used both.

6.11.1 Question One: Parental involvement at school

The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school.
In what ways do your parents involve themselves in the school?

Response:
Parents pay school fees although sometimes they have to borrow it.

6.11.2 Question Two: Parental involvement at home

In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?

Response:
• Parents help their children with homework or explain things the learners find difficult to understand.
• When no homework is given, parents come to the school to complain.
• Some parents inspect the children’s books and ask what the children did at school.
• Some parents encourage their children by giving them books or magazines to read.

6.11.3 Question Three: Attendance of parent meetings

When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?

Response:
Parents of the school attend meetings when they are not working. When they cannot attend, they delegate a relative to attend on their behalf. In cases where a parent cannot attend a meeting, s/he follows up by coming to the school to ask the principal what was discussed when she could not attend.

6.11.4 Question Four: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Do your parents pay school fees?

Response:
Parents who can afford to pay school fees do so. Those who cannot are helped out by a sponsor that the school organized.

6.11.5 Question Five: Communication between home and school

How does your school communicate with your parents?

Response:
• The school sends letters and notices home through the learners.
• Because this is private church school, the principal writes letters to the churches informing parents about what they need to know.
• Parents and teachers meet in church and discuss the progress of the children.
• Parents and teachers communicate through the communication book which the parents are required to sign everyday.
• For urgent business, the school phones the parents.
6.11.6 Question Six: Challenges experienced by learners

What challenges do you face as a result of parents not involving themselves fully in school activities?

Response:

• Money was identified as a challenge when parents can’t afford to pay school fees. The learners are thankful that they can get financial help from sponsors.
• Break-ins and burglaries. The school’s computer lab was broken into and the computers were stolen.
• The bad state of the classrooms was identified also as a challenge with roofs leaking, doors not closing properly.
• Learners complained that the school does not have enough classroom space and classroom furniture. They cannot carry out minor repairs like buying paint to paint the chalkboards or repairing broken windowpanes. Of concern to the learners was not having a sports ground because there would be no space to build it even if they could find a sponsor.
• Friends who tease the learners about the condition of the school because they themselves (friends) attend school in town (in former Model C schools).

6.12 SUMMARY FROM FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH LEARNERS

Focus group interviews were conducted with learners of the ten schools in the study. When learners were asked the extent to which their parents were involved in their education, the general finding was that parents felt that the SGB was representing them, so there was no need for them to be individually involved in school. However, it was alleged by some learners that parents felt that parental involvement involved a lot of hard work and they felt justified to keep themselves away from school. Parents were quoted as saying iyasebenzisa laa ntu [that thing involves a lot of work]. There was also a feeling among learners that teachers should not require parents to be involved.
Asked if parents involved themselves at home in helping with homework or school projects, it was found that generally parents do not help the children at home. Learners who live with their grandmothers do not expect to be helped because grandmothers are not sickly, but illiterate. Learners, especially High School ones felt that it was not necessary even to ask for help from parents because they were illiterate and could not help even if they wanted to. Learners observed that parents are negligent in general.

Responding to the question of whether parents meet their financial obligations, the finding was that some parents do pay school fees while others do not. Learners also admitted that when they were given the money to pay the school, they used it for themselves because both the school and the parents would not find out.

Asked if parents attended parent meetings, the finding were that very few parents attend because parents are have work commitments.

The next chapter will report on findings from interviews with the chairpersons of SGBs.
CHAPTER SEVEN
FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGBs) OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Interviews were conducted with chairpersons of the SGBs of the ten schools identified. The interviews were conducted in the backdrop of the duties and responsibilities of SGBs as stipulated in the SASA (84 of 1996). The study sought to investigate the extent of involvement of the SGBs in the management of the schools and whether or not they were capacitated to do so. Specific areas that were investigated included the following:

• promotion of the best interest of the school to ensure its development through the provision of quality of education for all learners at the school;
• developing the mission statement of the school;
• involvement in the drawing up of the code of conduct for the learners;
• encouraging parents, learners and other staff members to render voluntary services to the school;
• supplementing the resources provided by the State;
• involvement in preparing a budget.

To this end, interview questions were prepared (Appendix 6).

Interviews were conducted with chairpersons of the following ten schools:

• Shoulders High School
• Knowledge High school
• Revelation High School
• Kickoff High school
• Build It High School and
• Shushu Primary School
• Woodbundle Primary school
The chairperson of Shoulders High School occupies a high position at the Correctional Services in Port Elizabeth. He is in his early sixties. He lives in the same area where the school is. He has a child in the school. We met in his large office at the Correctional Services. It was quiet there except for disturbances by officers who needed to talk to him.

After I explained the purpose of my research, I assured him of the confidentiality of the interview and requested permission to capture the interview on tape - which was granted. The interview took place in IsiXhosa.

7.2.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

_The DoE as informed by the SASA wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools._  
_Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?_

Response:  
The SGB of the school monitors:

- the use of school funds
- the way children are treated by the teachers
- the way the children behave towards the teachers and vice versa.

In addition to that, they identify poor children and orphans and decide which cases should be exempted from paying school fees and simultaneously look for volunteers to pay those children’s school fees.
7.2.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?

Response:
- Some parents attend meetings while others don’t. The parents only come when invited to grade meetings. They do not attend general meetings.
- Even when they honour the invitation and come to meetings, they do not contribute much.
- When a decision is taken to involve parents in one way or another, they don’t do what they are tasked to do. He quoted an example of a school garden that parents agreed to involve themselves in, but did not follow up.

7.2.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.

Do parents pay their children’s school fees?

Response:
- No fundraising activities are engaged in but the SGB does just ask for sponsors now and again if there is a project that needs to be done.
- Very few children in the school come from the area itself. The children from the area attend school in town. About 90% of the children in the school come from the surrounding townships including informal settlements.
- Some parents pay school fees, others don’t. Some children are given school fees to pay but they use it for themselves.
- Before a parent is exempted from paying school fees, it has to be first established if s/he is really poor.
- The finance committee draws up the budget and the SGB budgets according to priorities.
7.2.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning.

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

Response:

• Relations between the teachers and the SGB are sometimes sour but at other times right. Teachers are said to do as they please sometimes and when the SGB intervenes, they say *asiqashawanga yi SGB, siqashwe nguRhulumente. ISGB iphethe isikolo, hayi iiititshala* [we are not employed by the SGB but by the DoE. The SGB only governs the school, not the teachers].

• Teachers point out that they did not sign any contract with the SGB and can therefore not be reprimanded by them (SGB).

7.2.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.

Have you received any training in performing your functions?

Response:

• The chairperson acknowledged that training of the SGB is imperative but it is not happening. They were never trained in understanding SASA.

• Once the SGB was taken to a training session where they just looked at case studies, which they were required to solve as groups. This training was inadequate.
7.2.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.

What challenges does the SGB experience that can hamper the smooth running of the school?

Response:

- Finance is a problem at the school. Although the school is a Section 21 school, the amount of money received from the DoE is insufficient to cover even the basic needs of the school.
- Lack of discipline among teachers and learners. Learners do not want to listen to their teachers and sometimes threaten them. Learners bully others. These matters can be sorted out by involving the parents.
- Dagga smuggling into the school.
- Late coming and absenteeism by both teachers and learners thereby hampering the progress of the school.
- Lack of uniformity in enforcing discipline. Some teachers enforce discipline while others don’t. Learners know which teachers will take them to task for wrongdoing and which will not act.

7.3 INTERVIEW TWO: SGB CHAIRPERSON OF KNOWLEDGE HIGH SCHOOL

The Chairperson of Knowledge High School is in his 60s but very enthusiastic and energetic. He is a board member at a community centre in the township. He is very politically oriented. He does not have an office in the centre but he arranged with the Director of the centre to use her office, which was upstairs. She agreed and brought us coffee. The office is tastefully furnished and quiet.

I thanked him for granting the interview and thanked him for his time. I explained the purpose of my visit and asked for permission to use the tape recorder. He granted it. I assured him of the confidentiality of the interview. I gave him the option to use
IsiXhosa or English whichever he was comfortable with. He responded mostly in IsiXhosa but used English where and when he felt like it. The interview then started.

7.3.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

*The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools. Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?*

Response:
The chairperson first explained that he is the chairperson of the SGB of two schools - Knowledge High School and Spinach Higher Primary School. He is more active in the Primary School than in the High School. The two schools belong to a cluster of 32 schools known as ZSSGB. The chairperson believes that the SGBs function better and are more effective as a cluster than as individual schools. He is the co-coordinator of the programme. The Association identified areas that needed urgent attention. Areas identified are:

- changing the state of the schools;
- fighting drug abuse in the schools;
- addressing discipline problems in the schools;
- claiming back from the town schools, children who come from the townships because that disadvantages the schools very much. They identified that the school buildings in the township were becoming white elephants. They believe that this was the cause for the discipline problems. The teachers who teach in the schools do not have children in the schools where they teach. Their children are in the white schools in town. The children end up very cheeky to the teachers. The chairperson voiced fears that this might be a challenge.

To address the first challenge, the Association have already established a relationship with the DoE, especially the technical side and Public Works.
The Association has also identified that the role black people play in education is different from the role that whites and coloureds play. They believe that these two groups are more advanced than black people. He cited the example of fund raising. He said black parents, contrary to white or coloured parents, do not support a fund raising event. The Association is intent on raising awareness of black parents to the importance of augmenting the school fund by supporting fundraising.

The SGB also involves parents in the community who do not have children in the school. There are six or seven parents who have food gardens in the schoolyard.

The membership of the SGB is also extended to people in the community who have some form of expertise, like people in sport or business - whoever can contribute something. The chairperson pointed out that the guidelines in the Constitution allow it.

7.3.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfill their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?

Response:

- The chairperson replied that about 45% of parents attend meetings but he was quick to add that black parents do not prioritise meetings. He gave the example that if parents are given three days’ notice of a meeting and then something else comes up, they don’t decline because of the SGB. They reckon that they don’t get paid for attending the SGB meetings after all.
- The schools that get 50% and above attendance are schools that compromise their learning day, for example, they hold meetings at 11:00 o’clock.
- Parents attend meetings if they (meetings) are scheduled at reasonable times. They don’t have a problem attending meetings after working hours.
• In winter parents have a problem attending meetings because it gets dark soon so meeting times have to be reconsidered and meetings rescheduled.

• The chairperson recognizes that most children do not live with their parents. Some live with their aunties, others live with their grannies that send the child to school because they have to. They do not play any other role. The mothers work in Johannesburg or Cape Town.

• Most parents are not employed. If they are invited to a meeting after 16:00 or 17:00, only 40% attend. At that time it’s time to think about what they are going to eat and feed the children. It is awkward for them and compromising the meeting.

7.3.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.*

*Do parents pay their children’s school fees?*

Response:

• The chairperson said that parents do not pay school fees because they do not understand why they should do so. Two reasons cited for non-payment include unemployment and the fact that the DoE announced that it is not necessary for parents to pay schools fees.

• The chairperson blames the SGBs for not explaining to the parents that paying school fees is part of a commitment towards the education of the child. He feels that the parents have to be made to understand that paying school fees is contributing to the education of a child.

• The SGB is involved in drawing up the budget of the school and monitoring it. The different departments of the school submit their estimates and the SGB then draws up a budget guided by those estimates.
7.3.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning. How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?

Response:
The relations between the staff of the SGB are good. The teachers are said to understand the role of the SGBs and appreciate their involvement. However it is some of the SGB members who nurse some fears that the class teachers may think that the SGB have come to disturb them during teaching time.

7.3.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.

Have you received any training in performing your functions?

Response:
In the previous month, the DoE had conducted training for 72 SGB members in the cluster. They were trained in the following aspects:

- Working relationships - how to maintain a working relationship between the stakeholders in the school namely, the learners, parents teachers and the SGB.
- Financial management, how to manage the school finances.
- External relationships, how the school should relate to the environment and the DoE and the business community around the school.
- Relationship between the principal and the chairperson of the SGB. The department discovered that most SGBs see themselves on a higher
pedestal than the principal and vice versa. According to the Act, both parties are equal in the management of the school. The chairperson of the SGB should coordinate the school annual programmes and the principal should manage those programmes on a day-to-day basis because he is always at school. There usually is a misunderstanding between these two. The principal always claims that nothing can happen in school without him and the chairperson of the SGB claims the same.

7.3.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed. What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?

Response:
The chairperson identified the following challenges:

- The school was previously a primary whose enrolment had dwindled as a result of the exodus of learners to town schools. The buildings need to be adapted for use by older children of high school age.
- The school is new in the surroundings. It moved from one area the previous year to the area where it is now. The challenge for the SGB is to introduce the school to the parents of the area. The children who support that school come from disadvantaged areas.
- Discipline and late coming are challenges. This needs to be taken up with the parents by the SGB so that they (the parents) hopefully take it up with their children.
- Drugs and the cellular phone. Children are not ashamed to use the cellular in class and sometimes walk out of class to answer a call. At a nearby school a teacher got into trouble for stopping a learner from taking a call in class. Were it not for the intervention of the SGB, the matter would have been taken to court and a charge laid by the parent. The SGB
Chairperson feels it is their duty to educate the learners about the use of the cell phone. He feels that a cellular phone should not be allowed to compete with the school as the school competes with the future of the child.

The chairperson recommends that former successful students of the school be invited to the school to motivate the learners. Nothing motivates like seeing somebody who has been in the school and who succeeded. That would help especially with discipline problems. If they see that the teachers who teach them taught those before them they can be motivated. The invitation would also be extended to those who were still at university to serve as role models. This was still a brain wave of the Chairperson, as he had not yet addressed it to the principal or the SGB or even the Association of the SGBs that he belonged to.

7.4 INTERVIEW THREE: SGB CHAIRPERSON OF REVELATION HIGH SCHOOL

The chairperson of Revelation High School is in his middle forties. He is a salesperson in a furniture shop. The interviews were conducted in the furniture shop in the busy street town. He maintained that that was the only convenient place to see him. Besides, business was slow in the mornings as customers were at their own places of work at that time. However on the appointed day, the staff had a meeting with their boss. I waited for the meeting to end for more than an hour. Eventually the meeting ended and the interview started.

We sat at one of the dining room tables together with his little daughter who had come to work with him because there was no school as the teachers were on strike. The table was at a corner out of earshot from the other sales people. We had to unavoidably compete with the noise from the traffic outside. The shop is situated conveniently (to attract customers) at an intersection. He and his daughter sat with their backs to the street and I sat facing the street. The shop also has an automatic bell that announces entrance and exit of customers. Regrettably, though unavoidable, these sounds were captured on tape, rendering it hardly audible.
Realizing this, I had to take as comprehensive short hand notes as I possible could. For transcription, I relied a lot on these notes.

I explained the purpose of my research and assured him of the confidentiality of the interview. I asked for permission to capture the interview on tape and it was granted. I explained to him that he was free to respond in IsiXhosa or English as he pleased or he could code switch. The responses were mainly in IsiXhosa. The interview then started. The chairperson’s answers were short and no attempt was made at elaborating even when prompted.

7.4.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools. Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?

Response
- The SGB chairperson of the school said the SGB is involved in the drafting of the code of conduct for the learners of the school and all matters pertaining to discipline.
- They are also involved in the drafting of the mission and vision for the school.
- They intervene when teachers encounter a problem of whatever kind.

7.4.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfill their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?

Response:
- Of the nine SGB members, only seven are still active. The other two fell by the wayside. They no longer attended parent meetings.
• Parents attend general meetings. At the meetings parents discuss the needs of the school and any new ideas they come up with.

7.4.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.

Do parents pay their children’s school fees?

Response:
Only a few parents pay school fees as a result the school struggles to make ends meet. The SGB however engages in raising funds for the school to assist when, for example, learners are going on a tour. Fundraising activities include organizing and staging beauty pageants. The teachers draft the budget according to their needs and priorities and the SGB approves it and determines where the shortfalls are.

7.4.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning.

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

Response:
The chairperson admitted that there are problems between the principal and some staff members. The matter has been reported to the SGB although no details were given. All the SGB knows is that there are teachers who are not cooperating with the principal and who do not take instructions from him. The SGB was planning to see these teachers and find out what the problem was and work out a solution with them. The chairperson understands that the teachers were dissatisfied and complaining about some posts but the SGB does not know what the problems is and what posts they are complaining about.
7.4.5  Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.

Have you received any training in performing your functions?

Response:
The chairperson said there was a training session that was organized by the DoE. It was conducted for all the schools in the area. For him it was an eye opener because it dealt with different issues like the budget and petty cash.

7.4.6  Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.

What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?

Response:
The chairperson identified only discipline problems and lack of funds. Probed further, he came up with nothing else.

7.5  INTERVIEW FOUR: SGB CHAIRPERSON OF KICKOFF HIGH SCHOOL

The SGB chairperson of Kickoff High School is a young woman in her late thirties. She lives a distance of about 30 kilometres from the school itself. Between where she lives and the school there are about three townships. She has a child in the school that is in grade twelve. Her child commutes by taxi to the school everyday at a cost of R10, 00 taxi fare a day.
The chairperson is a widowed domestic worker who works three days a week. She has three children. The first one is the one at Kickoff High School. According to her, she cannot educate the child further because she has no means. Her second child lives with her parents in Transkei. The third and last child is ten years and is in primary school at the area where they live.

When I phoned her for an interview, she suggested that I meet her at the school because she said it was going to be very challenging for me to find her place even with directions. However I took her home after the interview and reimbursed her fare.

The school is situated in a middle class township, which is populated by black professionals. The school itself is populated by learners from the surrounding informal settlements.

I explained the purpose of the interview and assured her of its confidentiality. I obtained permission from her to capture the interview on tape and she granted it. The interview was conducted in isiXhosa.

7.5.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools.

Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?

Response:

- The SGB is called in to intervene when there is a problem, for example when the principal has a problem with parents who do not pay school fees, or when the learners do not wear the school uniform.

- The SGB waits to hear from the principal what needs to be done. They don’t take action themselves until the principal tells them what to do.

- The SGB is involved in the formulation of policy for the school, for example, they were involved in the formulation of policy with regard to dress code of the boys recently come back from the bush (who are called amakrwala). The policy allows boys to wear amakrwala clothes for a
month only and afterwards they have to wear the school uniform. The SGB has to relay this to the parents and is called to intervene when the boys insist on wearing the *amakrwa*ala clothes from June to December.

- The SGB gives the parents a chance to air their views to make sure that everybody is involve.

### 7.5.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

*For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.*  
*Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?*

Response:

- There are parents who attend parent meetings and others do not. The ones who do not attend are in the majority. Only caring parents attend meetings. There are parents who don’t care if the children go to school or not. There are parents who do not know how their children are doing in school. They never take the trouble to find out if their children passed or failed. It looks like they take turns attending meetings. Those who come to a meeting do not turn up for a subsequent one.

- The SGB understands that there are parents who cannot attend meetings because of work commitments.

- Only two SGB members are actively involved in the school. The others last set their foot in school on the day they were elected. Sometimes they only attend the first meeting and that is all. The implication is that the two active members have to play the roles of the other five who dropped out.

### 7.5.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fund raising activities.*  
*Do parents pay their children’s school fees?*
Response:

- The last time the chairperson heard about the issue from the principal, the learners were not paying school fees. The SGB encouraged the principal to write to parents who were defaulting and ask them to pay up. The SGB understands that non-payment of school fees poses a problem when it is time to give the learners their progress reports.
- The SGB have never engaged in fundraising activities.
- The deputy principal and one of the SGB members draw up the budget. The chairperson also attends that meeting but does not participate.

7.5.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning. How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?

Response:
The principal informs the SGB what needs to be one.

7.5.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well. Have you received any training in performing your functions?

Response:
The SGB of the school never received any training. The chairperson reckons that they were chosen because they are clever. She admits that at no stage were they given any information - written or verbal on the role they should play. They just get instructions from the principal what to do and when.
7.5.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.
What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?

Response:
The SGB chairperson identified filthy, blocked toilets as the main challenge. She observed that toilets in other schools are clean and have mirrors and are tiled and there is usually a person whose duty is to clean the toilets. They don’t have such facilities at their school and need help.

The school experiences discipline problems. The principal sometimes follows the boys to the toilets and finds that they smoke dagga in there. The SGB asks the principal how they can help.

7.6 INTERVIEW FIVE: SGB CHAIRPERSON OF BUILD IT HIGH SCHOOL

The SGB chairperson of Build It High School is in his sixties and a community member. His house is a few metres from the school. He pointed it out to me. From his window he could see what goes on in the school, even the cars that come and go.

He is very enthusiastic and is determined to contribute towards the development of the school even though he himself went only up to Standard 2 (grade four). He has a track record of being an SGB member in another primary school for 15 years. The previous year he got an award from the MEC (Eastern Cape) as the best contributor to school development. He had brought the award along to show me. At the time of the interview, he had been chairperson of the SGB in the school for three months. He showed me the projects that he and the SGB already got sponsors for.
We were accommodated in the principal’s office since the principal was off sick from
the previous year (it was May). The chairperson confided that the (now sick)
principal blocked any advances that the SGB made towards getting into the school to
work with the teachers. All the projects that were in place only started after the he
went on sick leave and the deputy principal was acting. The deputy principal
welcomed the SGB and committed to work with them.

After I thanked him for his time and willingness to talk to me, I assured him of the
confidentiality of the interview. I obtained permission to capture the interview on tape
and it was granted. The interview then started. The atmosphere was cordial and the
environment was quiet.

After the interview, the chairperson insisted on showing me the feeding scheme in
action and the library that is in the process of being library. Both projects started in
the first three months that the new SGB was functioning. They had appealed for
sponsorships and obtained them.

7.6.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

*The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the
governance of schools.*

*Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?*

Response:

At the time of the interview, the SGB had only been functioning for three months.
Before that, the principal would not work with them, nor would he show them or
involve them in any way in the school activities. Now that he had been sick since the
previous year, the SGB worked with deputy principal and the staff. Progress was
already evident. For example:

- They already got Calabash Tours to sponsor a library, which was nearing
  completion at the time of the interview. They were still considering who to
  ask to sponsor books.
• They also got an overseas company to sponsor breakfasts and lunches for poor children. The company donates R1000 monthly. The school has set aside a classroom for this project. Women from the community take turns to cook for the poor learners. The learners eat in the morning and at break time (I witnessed it).

• They already got a company to donate a state-of-the-art duplicating machine because the old one that the school had was giving problems (I was shown the duplicating machine).

• Toyota Motors donated a car. They are going to have a raffle and with the proceeds they will set up a science laboratory.

• They got Cadbury to sponsor computers. They got three with the condition that they first secure the computer lab before the computers are delivered. They are in the process of putting up burglar bars in two classrooms. I was shown the progress.

The chairperson admitted that they are not involved in anything else, not even in sport. He described sport as dead in the school. They are negotiating with a local funeral undertaker to sponsor setting up playing fields for all sport codes.

The chairperson's dogs are also involved in securing the school. They were reported to patrol the school. Even the caretaker is alerted by them when something goes amiss. The school is situated in a dangerous area and yet the DoE does not want to hire either a night watchman or a caretaker. The caretaker the school has is employed by the school and gets paid R1000 a month from the school fund.

7.6.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfill their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?
Response:

- The chairperson said parents are lazy. They do not attend meetings. They are interested in what goes on in the school but they will not come to meetings. They do not do involve themselves in any way in the school.
- The chairperson admitted that the school is far removed from the area where the parents live. The school was recently built in the area where it now is. The learners still come from the area where the school was.
- The chairperson observes that some parents do not want to attend meetings. He described them as abafuni [they don’t want to].
- He compared high school parents to primary school parents whom he said were diligent in attending school meetings.
- Only three members of the SGB function.

7.6.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.*

*Do parents pay their children’s school fees?*

Response:
The parents of the school do not pay school fees. They promise but they never pay. They have money but they don’t pay. They say the government said they must not pay school fees. They are now waiting for the Government to help them because the school is poor. The chairperson is keen to see improvements but there is no money to do much.

7.6.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

*For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning.*

*How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?*
Response:

- The chairperson said teachers undermine the SGB. They undermine the authority of the SGB. He feels the need to be workshopped on how to deal with the teachers abadlokovayo [who are rebellious]. He gave an example of a teacher who is on a long sick leave (besides the principal). At some point, she collapsed in class. Learners have to sit without a teacher while she is away. The chairperson suggested that she be replaced. Oko engazange asibethe [we were lucky she did not beat us up]. She was so rude! This is attributed to teachers undermining the SGB. The chairperson admitted to the incapacity to deal with such cases.

- The pass rate in the school is low. It used to be between 60% and 70% but last year it dropped to 26%. The chairperson is convinced that staff is well qualified and have skills. They do not work because abalawuleki [they are ungovernable]. He regrets that the SGB has no power over teachers and there is nothing written in black and white (on how to deal with them). He thinks they behave this way because ndiliqaba [he is uneducated]. He appeals to government to help them by providing them with a constitution of the SGB so that they can act within the prescriptions thereof. (He was not aware that there is an SGB constitution in the SASA).

- The chairperson quoted the teachers of the school as saying the school is not a prison and the SGB is not a prison warder. They (teachers) are employed by the DoE and not by the SGB. They (teachers) say they are protected by rights and the DoE should afford them those rights. The SGB want protection from the DoE from abuse by teachers. He is concerned about the low productivity of the school.

7.6.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.
Response:
The SGB chairperson said they never received any training and they want it.

7.6.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.
What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?

Response:
• The chairperson is concerned that the school is dirty and needs cleaning up. The learners use classrooms as a toilet. They defecate inside the classrooms. Parents do not avail themselves to clean up the mess.
• Poor children pose a challenge. The chairperson says he is comfortable for now because there is money to feed the poor learners. The anxiety comes from not knowing what will happen when the sponsorship ends or when the number of children needing feeding will increase. The R1000 donation is sufficient for now but there is no knowing if it will suffice in future.
• Parents do not come to work in the garden. They used to come but were chased away by the former chairperson of the SGB. They don’t want to come back again.
• The school does not show the SGB what plans they have for the year. They do not know where help is needed.
• The deputy principal does not know where all the things are.

7.7 INTERVIEW SIX: SGB CHAIRPERSON OF SHUSHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

The SGB chairperson of Shushu Primary School is a young man in his early thirties. He is a chairperson of a community centre where the focus is on developing the skills of the community thus empowering them to be independent. Activities involve
projects like pottery, beadwork, computer literacy and helping poor children attending former Model C schools with school fees. The Centre also provides catering and sewing. A company from Germany funds the projects and the Centre also receives contributions from some community churches and businesses. He is serving as the SGB chairperson for the third term. That says the community have confidence in him.

I explained to the chairperson that he could respond in either IsiXhosa or English, whichever was comfortable for him. He responded mainly in IsiXhosa although he is an educated person.

I thanked him for his time and assured him of the confidentiality of the interview. I obtained permission from him to capture the interview on tape and it was granted. The interview then started.

7.7.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools.
Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?

Response:
• The chairperson said the SGB is involved in all areas of school governance.
• They make sure that the conditions under which the teachers work and learners learn are acceptable.
• They also encourage parents to be involved in the school.
• They revise the code of conduct from time to time. They make sure that the matters that are emphasized in the code of conduct are things that will not chase children away from school, for example, where they are treated as prisoners. But the leniency that they are afforded makes sure that there are guidelines of do’s and don’ts.
7.7.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?

Response:

- The chairperson responded with a yes and a no and then explained. At the beginning of the year, attendance of meetings is good but when the subject of money comes up, the numbers dwindle. For meetings where money will not be discussed, the agenda is sent ahead of time so that they can see that no money matters will be discussed and then attend. When a financial report is going to be presented the attendance is also good because parents want to know where their monies go. That includes those who do not contribute anything in the first place. He puts commitment at around 30, 40, and 50%. Sometimes the SGB does not even want money, just attendance.

- Providing refreshments at the end of the meeting helps. Some parents come directly from work to the meeting. Others did not have anything to eat the whole day. Others eat because it is the last meal they will have for that day and the next.

- The SGB members themselves attend meetings 70% of the time. This shows some commitment on their part. When they cannot attend a meeting, they send an apology and it is read at the meeting.

- The SGB is amazed at parents who have two children, one in a former Model C school and the other at their school. If the ex-Model C School calls a meeting - whether it is raining or snowing or there is a storm, the parent will make sure that s/he attends the meeting. This is interpreted to mean that parents respect the white schools more than the black schools.

- One factor these parents overlook is whatever experience they gain in the white schools, they can share in the black schools. This would develop our black schools to the standard of the white schools.

- The chairperson intimated that teachers need the support of the parents. They cannot do it alone. The SGB encourages them to help the teachers.
The learners perform and behave better when they see their parents involved in their education. That commitment would spread to other areas too, for example, the school fees. Parents would know how their monies are used. The chairperson gave an example of when he addresses parents. He always says that if a parent smokes, a packet of cigarettes costs R10. In a week that parent smokes R30. At weekends he needs another 3 packets. He spends about R60 a week on cigarettes. Add to that another R60 for alcohol. If they would sacrifice just one packet a week and use that money to pay school fees, their school would develop and grow.

7.7.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities. Do parents pay their children’s school fees?

Response:
• Every year the SGB is involved in the budget. They decide on the fee each learner should pay.
• A lot of parents cannot afford to pay school fees. They are very poor. They live in informal settlements that surround the school. To make up the shortfall (which happens all the time) the SGB organizes fund raising activities. The parents are involved in those activities.

7.7.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning. How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?
Response:
The Chairperson said relations between themselves and staff are good although sometimes it is the teachers themselves who choose when and when not to attend parent meetings. When we deal with issues that affect them directly, they are vocal, they come to the meeting. But when issues don’t affect them directly, they don’t attend meetings. But generally there is a working relationship with them.

7.7.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.

Response:
The SGB of Shushu Primary School attended training that was based on the SASA. The training was organized by the DoE. They had hired services of an NGO to do the training. The facilitators made sure that the SGB understood the Act - which was a good thing. The Chairperson made an observation that when you give parents books, they don’t look at them afterwards. They were taken through the duties of the SGB, drafting of the code of conduct, and discipline. Budgeting was not part of that module. It was going to be part of the next module. Although he had been a Chairperson for five terms, the SGB had never received any training before. They were just guided by the needs of the school.

7.7.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.
What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?
What does the SGB do to address the identified challenges?
Response:
The chairperson identified the following challenges:

- Parents become part of the school only during school hours. After school anything that happens at school is none of their concern. When they see strange people in the school after school hours, which does not bother them. They take that as the problem of the caretaker, not theirs.
- The crime rate in the community becomes a problem for the school. When they see that there are computers in the school, they see something that can earn them money. The ones that are supposed to be protecting the school are the ones who go to school to vandalise and steal from it. One of the challenges is to educate the community about protecting and looking after the school. The history of the black person in South Africa sees schools and public spaces as belonging to the government. They don’t respect them. They will pollute in public places - something they do not do in their own homes. Whatever belongs to the government is not their business. This is a challenge to change that kind of mindset.
- Drugs and alcohol pose a challenge. Where there is poverty that is where people are vulnerable. There are children who live in a one-room shack with parents who are alcoholics and unemployed; who fight, argue and beat each other in front of the children, and drink in front of them. Sometimes mummy and daddy are moody throughout the week and only at the weekend after they have had booze are they smiling and laughing and they start talking to the children. Children then associate happiness with the liquor. For them happiness is in the bottle. The school does have children like that.
- Pregnancy is a problem although it is not rife unless there might be cases that are not brought to the attention of the SGB. 2% pregnancies is a cause of great concern for the SGB because 2% becomes 4% the following year. The matter needs to be addressed urgently and the SGB is committed to that task.
- HIV/AIDS is a big challenge. The school has quite a number of both infected and affected learners including orphans. The SGB only gets to know about such cases when they enquire why the children do not pay
school fees. Then they get to know that the children are HIV/AIDS orphans and they live with their grandmother or aunt. So far the SGB and the school do not have a policy on how to deal with such cases. The chairperson feels that there is a need for the SGB to be educated and empowered on the subject. If they are not informed they may be thinking that they are helping when in fact they are messing up because they do not have the right tools.

- Teachers who are committed to the cause of education are a cause for concern. The feeling is that if they send their own children to former Model C schools, it means they do not give 100% commitment to the children that they teach and the schools where they are deployed. Sending them to the school where they teach would save them time and money. The chairperson concluded that the school stands on three legs - the child, the teacher, the parent. If all three legs are strong, then the schools would be strong.

7.8 INTERVIEW SEVEN: WHOLE SGB OF WOODBBUNDLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Before making an appointment to meet the SGB of each school, I asked the principal of the school to phone the chairperson and introduce me to him/her. This I did to make sure that the chairperson would be aware that the principal gave me permission to see him/her. It was also to make sure that the chairperson was aware that I was not going behind the principal's back to perhaps spy on him/her (principal). I followed the same procedure with the principal of Woodbundle Primary School. She suggested that I meet the chairperson at the school on the same day that I would meet her first, then the focus group of the teachers, then the chairperson of the SGB and then the focus group of the learners. The two focus groups must have confused her because when I waited for the chairperson of the SGB, in came the whole SGB. At the time, the principal had already left for another meeting and I could not tell the others that I did not want to meet them, especially on the day like that - it was cold and raining and the members had braved the weather to come. So I interviewed the whole SGB although only the chairperson signed the consent form.
The group consisted of six parents - one man and five women. The chairperson is in his sixties and the others ranged in age between 27 and 55. The youngest of the group joined the group 10 minutes into the interview. She was the educator member of the SGB. Because it is a primary school, there was no learner member of the SGB. Two members dominated the interview despite my repeated efforts to involve the other members as well. Two members left without uttering a word throughout the interview. They simply looked from one to the next. Two of the older women are volunteers who clean the toilets in the school and also work in the school garden. The interview gave her a chance to appeal to other members for help.

The interviews were conducted in a computer lab that looks more like a storage place for the computers. The computers were new and had been donated to the school by a company. At the time of the interview they had not yet been used and were gathering dust. It was relatively quiet except for the latecomer and a few knocks on the door with the knockers looking for this person or that.

After introducing myself and informing them of the aim of my visit, I thanked the members for their time especially for braving the kind of wet weather and cold we had that day. I assured them of the confidentiality of the interview and obtained permission from them to capture the interview on tape - to which they agreed. The interview was conducted in IsiXhosa. The interview then started.

**7.8.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school**

*The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools.*

*Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?*

**Response:**

- The SGB of the school are involved in fundraising for the school. However they were quick to add that that initiative did not come from the parents or the SGB, but from the principal of the school.
- When invited to meetings with the SMT, they come and contribute our ideas.
7.8.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

*For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.*

*Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?*

Response:

- Not all parents attend meetings, but the hall in which the meetings are held fills up (the hall referred to are two classrooms with the partition removed) between them. The school has an enrolment of 700 learners.
- Some parents have work commitments and cannot attend parent meetings.
- The principal and teachers come up with ideas and they ask the parents to figure out how they are going to make the idea a reality. An example was cited of the school suggesting that parents clear a piece of ground and set up a playing field. They came up with the plan to come and make bricks to fence the school with a brick wall (this has not been realized although the decision was made long ago).

7.8.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.*

*Do parents pay their children’s school fees?*

Response:

- Parents do not meet their financial obligations. They do not pay school fees. Most parents pay school fees in December so that they can get their children’s reports. Most end up not paying at all. Getting their children’s progress reports does not bother them. They never get to know how their children are doing in school. They just see them progressing from class to class. School fees are only R35, far less than what other schools charge.
- An announcement was made on radio that the government is going to supply the schools with everything. Parents do not see why they should
pay school fees. The assumption is that the school will buy their children books.

- Some parents “struggle to make ends meet.” Those who get the child grant spend the money on other necessities for the home and do not have money left over to provide school requirements. The Government child grant does not stretch that far.

- In September of every year, the teachers fund raise to take the children out to McDonalds. Parents do not support that initiative although it benefits their children. Only those children who can pay the required R40 are taken out to McDonalds and the others are left behind.

- There was a feeling that ways should be found to encourage parents to take interest in the progress of their school and to communicate with the school if they have problems paying.

- The suggestion from the educator member was that government should investigate conditions in the homes of the children because some people are really struggling. Some learners go to bed without food. She said it would help if this would be investigated and the situation is assessed because some parents take advantage. They have the money but they just do not want to pay.

- There is a perception that the school has a lot of money which the principal and the SGB misuse or embezzle. The chairperson said he does not blame them; they are ignorant.

- There was a suggestion that perhaps the DoE should come and explain to parents what their obligations towards the school are. The chairperson admitted not to know. He said he knew that children should cover their books.

7.8.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning.

How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?
Response:
Cordial relations exist between the SGB and the school. Two parent members volunteered to work in the garden and also clean the toilets.

7.8.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

_in order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well._

Response:
The SGB of the school never received any training nor were they ever invited to training workshops with other schools.

7.8.6 Question 6: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.
What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?

Response:
• At times, a social worker is invited to the school but the parents do not attend the information sessions. That results in them not being aware of the kind of assistance they can get from the social services.
• There is no security in the school as a result there are burglaries.
• A large number of the parents of the school are struggling to make ends meet.
• Many of the school children live with their grandparents who sometimes are struggling themselves because the parents are dead.
• Most parents do not understand the rationale for rendering free services to the school if they are not going to be paid.
I could not secure an appointment with the chairperson of the SGB of this school because of his work commitments. However I secured an appointment with one of the SGB members. She is over 70 years old but is still very actively involved in the school especially in fundraising activities. She makes beadwork for the school to sell to raise funds and to present to overseas visitors as souvenirs. She also teaches the schoolgirls how to do beadwork. She was very well dressed, complete with a pearl necklace and nylon stockings like she was going to church or a formal occasion.

The interview was conducted in the principal’s office (she was in class teaching) where it was very quiet. We spoke in IsiXhosa.

After I introduced myself in my clan name (as expected in the culture of her day), she did likewise. I thanked her for her time and assured her of the confidentiality of the interview. I explained the reason for the interview and how I would appreciate some honest answers. I obtained permission from her to capture the interview on tape and she granted it. The interview then started.

7.9.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools.
Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?

Response:
• The SGB of the school are involved in the committees serving the school, like the safety committee to which the lady belonged. The school had been promised computers by some sponsor with the condition that they would be safe and her committee was in the process of securing the laboratory where the computers would be housed. That morning they had met to discuss what they would need to do to make sure that the computers would be safe from thieves.
• No outside security is employed because they are not trustworthy.

7.9.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?

Response:

• Very few parents attend meetings even though a lot of them are not employed. The school only sees them when they come to collect their small children at twelve.

• Young parents do not usually attend parent meetings. Only old people attend meetings.

• Bayasokola batya imali yegrant [They struggle to make ends meet so they make a living out of the government child grant].

• Foster parents attend parent meetings but will not help the school in any way, not even in fund raising.

• When it comes to fundraising, very few parents involve themselves.

• Parents do not want to help the school in any way. At some stage the school had identified projects that the parents could engage in like a garden project, a sewing project and a beadwork project. The intention was to produce goods and sell them to raise funds for the school. All the parents were excited and enthusiastic but there was no follow up with action. The interviewee was the only one still working on the beadwork project.

• Beside involvement in projects and attendance of meetings in no other way are parents of the school involved in school activities.

7.9.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.

Do parents pay their children’s school fees?
Response:
*Nzima* [difficult]. It was June at the time of the interview but a lot of parents had not paid school fees. A lot of the parents are child grant holders but still they do not pay the school. They use the money to buy liquor and drink themselves to stupor.

7.9.4 **Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB**

*For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning.*

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

Response:
- Good relations exist between the SGB and the principal as well as the rest of the staff. No teacher ever reported to the SGB that such a parent had treated him/her badly.
- The SGB also has not been in conflict with any parent. The interviewee was quick to add that she had not met all the parents, only those who attend meetings and involve themselves in school activities.

7.9.5 **Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions**

*In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.*

**Have you received any training in performing your functions?**

Response:
The SGB of the school has never been invited to any workshop dealing with how they should play their roles and responsibilities.
7.9.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.
What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?

Response:
The interviewee responded that she did not know if there was anything else they need to be doing. Apart from raising funds for the school and attending meetings, they do not know if they should be doing something else.

7.10 INTERVIEW NINE: SGB CHAIRPERSON OF HORSERADISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The SGB Chairperson of Horseradish Primary school is a lady of over 60 but still very energetic. She is retired and is therefore available at home. When I phoned to secure an appointment, she told me that I could only come after 11:00 because she only wakes up at around 10:00. The interview took place in her sitting room. She was kind to switch off the radio when I asked. As it was a cold morning, she kindly offered to light the paraffin heater for me but I politely declined the offer. She was still dressed in her pyjamas and gown. She also offered coffee, which I also declined.

After I introduced myself, I thanked her for her time and for agreeing to see me. I explained the purpose of the interview and asked for permission to use the tape recorder to capture the interview. Permission was granted. I assured her of the confidentiality of the interview. The interview then started.

7.10.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools.
Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?

Response:
The SGB of the school is involved only when they see that there is a matter that needs their attention. They decide if they can address the matter themselves without involving the parents or they need to involve them. They act in the best interest of the school.

7.10.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?

Response:
Yes, parents of the school attend meetings.

7.10.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.

Do parents pay their children’s school fees?

Response:
• There are parents who pay and others who don’t. The SGB encourages those who do not pay to pay.
• The SGB does not engage in fundraising activities.
• The financial report is read only in January.
• The Chairperson complained that teachers are clever because they are educated. They do not give the SGB all the facts about how they use school funds. They just want the Chairperson to sign without knowing how much the item will cost. She was not satisfied with the procedures of getting money out of the school account. That posed a big problem for her.
7.10.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning. How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?

Response:
The SGB chairperson said there were no serious problems between the SGB and the staff. The staff were just “too clever to tell the SGB everything”.

7.10.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well. Have you received any training in performing your functions?

Response:
• The chairperson admitted that she was just elected chairperson without knowing what is expected of her. She feels that the SGB Chairpersons should be paid for what they are doing because the teachers are also paid. When she wakes up at ten, she goes to school to check if the teachers are teaching and the children are in class. She checks if the yard is clean. She checks the windows and notes those that are broken and need repair. She feels that she should be paid for doing what she is doing. She admits that she does not know if she should be doing what she is doing.
• SGB training was only done in March this year (since the elections the previous year). They were told who qualifies to be in the SGB.
• The principal of the school had earlier told the chairperson that the role of the SGB is to chair meetings.
• The chairperson heard from another lady that the duty of the chairperson is to oversee everything in the school. Those under her should be informed by her what needs doing.

• She was informed by the principal that she did not need it because her job was just to chair meetings. The lady informant again informed her that there was a manual and she gave her a copy.

7.10.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.

What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?

Response:
- Vandalism and theft of school property were problems experienced. The thieves were stealing copper taps to make rings.
- The principal informs the SGB when there is a problem.

7.11 INTERVIEW TEN: CHAIRPERSON OF CHURCH STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

The chairperson of Church Street Primary School is a young man of around 30. We met in his office in a big German manufacturing factory that exports motor car products. He shared the office with the secretary. On my arrival he phoned someone to ask if the boardroom was available and was told it was not. He said I could conduct the interview in the office. The secretary assured me that it was okay. It was quiet in the office, with the secretary carrying on with her work as if my presence there was not an issue. The phone rang once while she had gone out at tea time.

I explained the purpose of my visit and assured him of the confidentiality of the interview. I asked for permission to capture the interview on tape and it was granted.
I informed him he had the option of using IsiXhosa or English - whichever he was comfortable with. The responses were mainly in IsiXhosa but a lot of English was used as well. The interview started.

7.11.1 Question One: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school

The DoE, as informed by the SASA, wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools. Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?

Response:

• The SGB of the school monitors the progress of the school. They make sure that the policies of the school do not contradict with government policy.

• The SGB is involved in the drawing up of the code of conduct and makes sure that it is realistic for all learners in the school and it covers the roles that parents should play. The code is revised from time to time according to the needs of the school. The SGB is careful that the amendments they make are not in conflict with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. They also have to make sure it does not conflict with the principles of their church.

• The SGB recognizes the challenge they have of HIV/AIDS. They are looking at ways of meeting the challenge so that children can be taught how to prevent it.

• The parents get sponsorships to address whatever the school is faced with.

• Parents sometimes visit the classes while the teachers are teaching and listen as the lessons are presented. The teachers do not feel threatened.

7.11.2 Question Two: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings

For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.

Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?
Response:

- Yes, the parents of the school attend meetings. Those who for some reason cannot attend a meeting, visit the school on some later date to find out what resolutions were taken at the meeting.
- The meeting days and times of the meeting have to be convenient for the parents.

7.11.3 Question Three: Parents meeting their financial obligations

*Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fundraising activities.*

*Do parents pay their children’s school fees?*

Response:

- The school solely depends on contributions from the church congregations in Port Elizabeth. All the congregations of the church contribute towards the school. The principal reports on those congregations that do not send their contributions through. The SGB is composed of elders in the churches, the education director of the church and one other member who is elected to be a chairperson. The elders whose congregations do not pay their contributions are required to write a letter explaining why their churches have not contributed (in cases where no contribution has been received) and hand it over to the SGB secretary.
- Parents meet their financial obligations. However if a parent cannot pay school fees, he/she has to phone the principal. Some SGB members are delegated to go to that home to assess the extent of the need and then make recommendations to the rest of the SGB.
- At the beginning of every year, the principal presents budget estimates. The SGB then determines what the school fees should be and compare it with the number of learners enrolled. They also keep in mind that there will be fundraising efforts in the course of the year. The previous year’s fund-raising realized R16 000,00.
7.11.4 Question Four: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB

For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning. How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?

Response:
Working with staff is a pleasure. When the SGB comes up with proposals, the two parties “reason together and there are no fears that the SGB is hijacking the school”. The teachers open the door and let the SGB take the school to higher ground.

7.11.5 Question Five: Training in performing roles and functions

In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGB. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.

Have you received any training in performing your functions?

Response:
The previous year the SGB of the school attended a training workshop organized by the DoE. They were shown how to draw up policies for the school. The SGB of the school was fully represented.

7.11.6 Question Six: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school

For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.

What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?
Response:

- The school has no grounds for sporting activities. Learners play in soccer and netball fields of a nearby school when possible. The school would like to introduce rugby and cricket but this cannot happen because they do not have playgrounds.

- They have challenges that emanate from their being a church school. Their church conference sends them a subsidy that is not comparable to what they send to the coloured and the white schools. The teachers are paid far less than the government teachers. There is a feeling that teachers should be paid the same.

- The school did not have a policy for HIV/AIDS. Now because of the things that happen around the school, they have to have it.

- Resources like a screen are a challenge. They are looking for sponsorships.

- Their other challenge is non-availability of playgrounds for children.

- The only thing that they have is a choir.

- The school runs a feeding scheme in the mornings for all the children. It is sponsored by a bakery in town. The parents then cut the bread. Most children take the bread but there are some who don’t. The government feeding scheme was discontinued because of lack of consistency and sustainability.

7.12 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH CHAIRPERSONS OF SGBS

On the question that needed to establish from the SGBs the extent of involvement of parents in the school, the finding was that generally parents are not involved in school activities. That includes the SGB parent members some of whom were alleged to have been last seen in school on the day they were elected. The exceptions were parents of Shushu Primary School and Church Street Primary School whose involvement was commendable although it was not 100%. The chairpersons also indicated that the worst culprits in not involving themselves in school were foster parents and young mothers. It was also intimated that there are
learners who live with their grandmothers who are not expected to be involved in school activities because of old age and illiteracy.

Asked what roles the SGB played in school, it was found that some SGBs monitor the use of school funds. Some look out for children who need to be exempted from paying school fees after assessing the home conditions. There are SGB chairpersons who said they were involved in the drafting of the code of conduct for the school as well as the vision and the mission statements. One SGB chairperson said they (SGB) intervene when teachers experience problems. About 60% of the SGBs said they wait for the principal to inform them when something needs doing and how it should be done. About 20% of the chairpersons complained that the principals sideline them and not show them what their duties and responsibilities are. This ties up with the responses of chairpersons on whether or not they received any training capacitating them on how to perform their duties. Those who received some training only received training in only one aspect but not in all areas of school governance. The chairperson of Shushu Primary School said in the three terms that he had been chairperson; it is only in the previous year that he received any form of training. For him it was “too little too late”.

Asked whether parents kept abreast with developments at school by attending parent meetings, the finding was that few parents attend parent meetings and when they do, they do not contribute much. They listen to what the school or the SGB puts on the table. The feeling was that meetings are not prioritised since parents are not paid for attending school meetings. Some parents were said to attend grade meetings only, but not general meetings.

The SGBs were asked to comment on whether parents met their financial obligations towards the schools. The finding was that most parents are poor and unemployed and cannot afford to pay school fees. Even parents who receive a government child grant cannot pay school fees because it is not sufficient to cover basic needs of the home. Some parents were said to squander the grant money on liquor. Asked if the parents and the SGB supplement school fund by engaging in fundraising activities, the finding was that less than 20% of parents help raise funds for the school. It was reiterated that parents do not engage in something that will not pay them.
It is recognized that for the SGB to be effective, they need to work hand-in-hand with the teachers at schools. The chairpersons were asked to comment on how they relate to the teachers. The finding was that the SGBs of primary schools relate well with the teachers, but that cannot be said of the high schools where the situation ranges from “no relationship to talk about” to “we teachers are not employed by the SGB and have no obligation to take instructions from them”. Some chairpersons complain that the teachers are rude to them and they are ungovernable. Teachers further point out that they are protected by the Labour Relations Act (LRA).

Asked what challenges hinder the smooth running of the school, the chairpersons cited poverty and lack of money to run the school, discipline problems among both teachers and learners, and lack of uniformity in enforcing discipline as most challenging. Some teachers were said to be lax while others were strict. Drug abuse, late coming and absenteeism, high pregnancy rate even among primary school girls, HIV/AIDS, lack of safety and security, and so on, were challenges that the SGBs faced. There are chairpersons who complained of lack of commitment among teachers because their (teachers’) own children were in former Model C schools in town. The chairpersons were concerned about the dwindling numbers in the township schools as a result of the exodus of children from those schools to the former Model C schools in town.

The next chapter deals with data analysis.
CHAPTER EIGHT
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The study sought to establish the extent of involvement of black parents in the education of their children. The finding was that black parents do not involve themselves in school generally and specifically in school activities. It was also found that the non-involvement of parents in school was to a great extent deliberate and was influenced by factors beyond the control of parents. These factors will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

8.2 CATEGORIES

Findings have been grouped into categories derived from multiple readings of the raw data, and from words and phrases used by the informants themselves. Some of the categories have sub-categories. A total of eight categories have been created which in terms of the findings capture the key aspects of the themes in the raw data. The categories are discussed below.

8.2.1 Illiteracy

The study identified illiteracy as one of the major factors that militate against the parents’ meaningful involvement in school. The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary (1962) defines “illiterate” as ignorant of letters; unlearned; unable to read. The implication here is that a parent who is illiterate cannot read and write and therefore cannot assist his/her child with anything that requires reading and writing. Ntshingila (2006) reported that one in three South Africans over the age of 20 has no schooling at all or has not completed primary school.

Cooter (2006:698) differentiates between functional illiteracy and intergenerational illiteracy. She defines a functionally illiterate parent as an adult who does not have adequate reading skills to fill out a job application, read a food label, or read a story
to a child. These individuals often lack the literacy skills needed to find and keep a decent job, support their children’s education, or participate actively in civic life. Quoting statistics released by the READ educational Trust, Ntshingila (2006) maintains that functional literacy is the equivalent reading and writing skills of a nine-year-old child. Statistics cite poverty and the lack of resources as two of the main reasons for the high levels of illiteracy in the country. It has been observed that *when impoverished children enter the formal schooling system, they are often physically, socially, cognitively and emotionally underdeveloped, and lack the necessary foundation to begin literacy, numeracy and life skills work at school.*

Intergenerational illiteracy is a socio-cultural phenomenon whereby illiterate parents inadvertently sponsor home conditions that may seriously hinder their children’s reading and writing development, thus perpetuating a cycle of illiteracy. Intergenerational illiteracy often exists in high poverty urban and rural settings where it is common for teachers to find that three or four generations of a family have low literacy skills. Cooter (2006:698) believes that factors that contribute to these conditions are a lack of strong language examples, little child-parent interaction, and lack of quality print materials. Many poor people must hold several minimum-wage jobs, which rob them of valuable time with their children. They may also hold culturally supported beliefs about leaving school to support their families and lack access to services such as quality pre-schools. Cooter adds that illiteracy is not a matter of choice but a predicament.

As part of teaching and learning, teachers give learners homework and encourage them (learners) to seek assistance of their parents to complete the given tasks. Additionally, teachers expect parents as partners in education to track the progress of their children’s learning by looking at the children’s school books and homework diaries and signing them everyday. Another learning activity that is standard in any school is a requirement that teachers give learners projects, which require the assistance of the parent to complete.

When teachers and the principals were asked if there was evidence of involvement in this regard, they responded that there was no evidence of the envisaged and expected involvement. The learners’ homework books and diaries were, as a matter
of practice, hardly ever signed by parents. One teacher said that in her class of 45, only two parents signed the homework books and diaries. Teachers said that in their experience of working with parents they (parents) do not, as a matter of principle, help with the projects either.

Teachers believe that illiteracy plays a major role in that parents do not involve themselves in the areas identified. The following terms were used by both the principals and the teachers to describe the parents:

They fear that because they are themselves not educated, they feel that they cannot contribute anything.
Parents cannot support education because they themselves are not educated. They cannot support it (education).
Parents cannot help with the work they themselves cannot understand. They did not do Mathematics so they cannot help with it.
Parents are not capacitated to help their children with homework.
They (parents) cannot balance a bank statement.
They are ignorant.
They can’t think.
A high school teacher said, Parents cannot help their children make subject choices at home.
Bayazidelela [they undermine themselves] because they are not educated. They don’t even want to try.
They are not acquainted with policy so they cannot contribute anything to policy implementation.

Learners also concurred with the principals and the teachers that parents cannot help them in areas that require that a parent be literate because they (parents) are not educated. The same sentiment was echoed by the SGBs. Learners added that their parents, however, helped with projects that related to IsiXhosa cultural issues, because they (parents) originally came from emaXhoseni [the rural areas] before they moved to the townships.
Learners also indicated that illiterate parents would ask a neighbour, a relative or an older sibling of the child to check and sign the children's books or even attend a school meeting on their behalf.

Illiteracy has been identified as an area where non-involvement is beyond the parents' control and is therefore not deliberate.

8.2.2 Poverty

Involvement in the child's education includes making the child ready for school by providing relevant resources and basic necessities. Respondents, excluding the SGBs, felt that even though some parents would like to help their children, they are so poor that helping is impossible. Teachers mentioned that some children came to school in dirty uniforms because the parents did not have soap to wash the uniforms with. They pointed out that most poor parents depend on the monthly government child grant.

Petesch (2007) reports that it emanated at the meeting of the G8 countries that not a single country in sub-Saharan Africa was on target to meet the United Nations goals of cutting poverty by half. The implication is that the world over is aware of poverty in Africa, and South Africa is no exception, but nothing is being done to effectively reduce poverty and its impact on education.

An example was cited by teachers of Woodbundle Primary School of learners who dropped out of school to be taxi conductors at a nearby taxi rank so that they could earn a few rands a day. It was alleged that parents of such children are sometimes not even aware that their children have dropped out of school, because there is lack of communication between them and the teachers.

One teacher said that there are learners who miss school at least once a week to go and work so as to earn enough money to buy food. Another teacher also said there are learners who engage in prostitution in order to get money to buy food. In the mornings, the teachers observe that these learners are too tired to even concentrate in class. One teacher also made the observation that this is how poor learners afford
cell phones. It can be assumed that parents of such learners also see the cell phones, but do not worry how their children acquired such expensive items when they themselves are struggling to provide the children with basic necessities.

The learners were asked in what ways the parents provided a supportive environment for learning at home. Respondents said that they were not provided with a demarcated place to study because the houses they live in are small. A large majority of the respondents live in informal settlements. This forces them to study in the family room while other occupants of the household are watching TV or going about their business. It is left to the learners to choose a suitable time to study when other occupants of the house have gone to bed. Pather (2007:7) reported that 4.3 million (mostly) black people still live in shacks, either in urban areas or squatter camps. This number constitutes 14% of the total population of South Africa.

Education does not become a priority when parents are poor. Learners also confessed that it was difficult for some parents to buy them school uniforms. Poverty militates against parental involvement in education. It is also an area where parents do not have control.

8.2.3 Non-attendance of parent meetings

As partners in education, schools schedule parent meetings throughout the year with the purpose of sharing information pertaining to the education of the learners. The meetings may be general or specific. In general at meetings, issues discussed pertain to occurrences in the school. Specific meetings like grade meetings are meant to be one-on-one meetings between parent and teacher where the progress of each child is discussed and suggestions of what to improve are put forward by both parties to improve the performance of the child. Another specific kind of meeting is a business meeting where a budget is tabled; a financial report is presented to the parents or where parent input is sought in determining the amount that should be contributed towards school fees.

The study found that in general parents do not attend meetings whether they are general or specific. Teachers said that some parents do not even come to collect
progress reports at the end of the year and these accumulate year after year. One teacher said they are still keeping reports dating back to 1995. A case was cited of a parent who came to pay school fees for a child who had dropped out of school five years earlier.

The chairpersons of SGBs also concurred that very few parents attend parent meetings even though many of them are not employed. One chairperson established attendance of parents at parent meetings at 45%. Although young parents of small children come to fetch their children from school at 12:00, in no other way are they involved in school. One chairperson accused some parents of not caring whether their children went to school or not. Another chairperson said that some parents are interested in knowing what goes on in school, but they will not go to school to get the information first hand.

It was found that it frustrates the teachers that the parents we want to see most are the ones who stay way from school. They (teachers) are concerned that these parents are not aware of the needs of their children. One teacher said it takes us two to three attempts to get them [parents] to come to school.

The study found that schools have tried to schedule meetings on different days including weekends, and at different times of the day to try to accommodate as many parents as possible. Every effort failed. Teachers interpret this to mean that it is not the unsuitability of the day of the week or the time of the day that keeps parents away; parents just don’t want to involve themselves.

Some teachers admitted to have given up on communicating with parents because in the informal settlements where they live, there are no fixed addresses and the residents do not necessarily stay in one place for long. Trying to communicate with them sometimes proves a futile exercise.

Learners remarked that communication between home and school is one-sided. It comes from the school to the parents and not the other way around. It is the teachers who want to see the parents, but the parents find no reason to initiate communication with the teachers.
### 8.2.3.1 Reasons for non-attendance of parent meetings

Some reasons were advanced for parents’ non-attendance of school meetings. These include work commitments. Most mothers who sleep at their places of work arrive home late and are tired.

The other reason advanced for non-attendance of meetings was that learners fail to give parents notices of meetings or invitations to meetings. Learners agreed that they do not see why their parents should be involved individually in school activities because the SGB represents their parents in all matters of school governance and policy. It can safely be assumed that this understanding of the learners reflects the thinking of the parents around issues of their involvement. It provides an answer as to why parents do not involve themselves.

Learners also admitted to not delivering letters of invitation to their parents unless they knew the contents of the letters, lest they spell trouble for them (learners). The trouble referred to includes parents finding out about learners staying away from school for a week without their parents knowing about it or lying about examination results. An example was made of one learner who was still in grade nine when his parents expected him to be in grade twelve. Another matter that learners claimed to lie about is the amount of money that the school requires. They sometimes inflate the amount so that they have money left over for themselves. Learners also admitted that if there is a return slip at the bottom of a letter of invitation, they forge the parent’s signature and return the slip to the school. Teachers agreed that parents also stay away from school when they know that their child has been naughty. The teachers accused parents of not taking responsibility for their children’s behaviour and for leaving it to the teachers to sort out.

One learner, a prefect at a primary school, said that in their class of 34 learners, a maximum of 10 parents attended grade meetings. The reason advanced by the learner was that parents are scared that the teachers would require them to pay school fees or expose and embarrass those who have not already done so. The teachers noted with surprise that when a business meeting is called specifically to give a financial report, *the hall fills up because the parents want to hear if we have*
not misused the school funds which they do not contribute towards. This creates the impression that parents would go to the schools if they had reason enough to do so or if the reason they were invited was interesting enough.

Learners also said that parents do not want to go near the school for fear of being scolded by the teachers who talk to them as if they are talking to young children. Parents admitted to being fearful of talking to educated people such as the teachers. This attitude is reflected by the following statements uttered by parents when they receive an invitation to visit the school according to the learners:

- *Sis, esi sikolo sinikezela qho iileta; soze ndiya apho mna* [This school always sends invitations. I am never going to go there].
- *Soze ndincame ubuthongo bam ndiya esikolweni mna* [I will never give up my sleep just to go to the school].
- *Hay’ suka; ndifuna ntoni kwesiya sikolo?* [Leave me alone; what do I want from that school?]

These statements illustrate that teachers may also be a contributory factor to parent non-involvement because of their perceived disrespectful attitudes towards the parents.

Grade seven learners of Charlie Pride Primary School feel that giving them letters and notices to take home is an indication that the teachers do not trust them to tell the parents what they (teachers) need or want. They said they are old and responsible enough to relay whatever message they are given. It is an insult to them not to be trusted. This attitude reflects a relationship that is lacking trust and respect between learners and the teachers. Learners simply decide not to deliver the letters.

Cases were reported of learners who were too ashamed of their (poor and shabby) parents pitching up in school for fear of ridicule by other learners. This allegedly happens mostly to poor families who live in informal settlements. If they (learners) cannot bring a better off uncle or aunt, they ‘hire’ a parent in the street to come and represent their parents when the school forces the learner to bring a parent. The school becomes aware of this arrangement when the ‘employer’ fails to pay the
‘employee’ the promised fee. The ‘employee’ then reports the matter to the school authorities. An impression is created that learners will go to great lengths to avoid having their parents come to their school. Learners also play a major role in ensuring that their parents do not attend school meetings.

8.2.3.2 Abakhathali [They do not care]

The study found that one reason parents do not attend school meetings is due to abakhathali [they do not care]. This descriptive was frequently used by all the interviewees (teachers, principals, learners and chairpersons of SGBs). This term was used to indicate that parents neglect their children and do not carry out their parent responsibilities especially when they (parents) are drunk - which is not uncommon. On rare occasions when they are forced to come to school, some come drunk. This indicates an indifferent attitude towards school.

Teachers of Shushu primary School alleged that a number of learners in the school suffer from TB with which they were infected by their parents. They (teachers) feel that they would be in a position to help if the parents approached them or came to school when invited. Because of abakhathali they would rather stay away from school even though they know that the teachers take responsibility for their sick children during school hours. Teachers are aware that TB is infectious and it concerned them that they could not assist those children being infected by others. They also did not feel safe from infection by the learners. Quoting Statistics South Africa, Laing (2007) reported that TB was responsible for 12.5% of natural deaths. Hence the concern of the teachers.

The term was also used in relation to neglect of parents to pay school fees. A teacher from Shushu Primary School said, abakhathali abazali balapha [parents of this school do not care] because the parents who receive a social child grant do not pay school fees because of abakhathali. When threatened by teachers to report them (grant holders) to the social workers, they simply transfer their children to another school. The grant money is not used for the purpose for which it is intended. Instead it is allegedly used to buy liquor. This is indicative of an indifferent/nonchalant attitude towards school and what it represents.
Teachers, principals and chairpersons of SGBs identified parents who do not contribute anything to the school, if they do not receive remuneration for their services. Included in this category are those who do not make any monetary contribution to the school. The school sometimes requests volunteers to undertake repairs when the school has been vandalized. Parents allegedly state categorically that if they are not remunerated, they cannot help. Teachers even struggle to acquire the support of unemployed parents in the implementation of the feeding scheme for the learners. A case was cited by teachers of Woodbundle Primary School of a painting project that failed because parents refused to be involved if they were not adequately remunerated. A NGO had offered to buy paint for the school if the school would organize parents to do the painting. Parents did not want to involve themselves.

The study also indicated that some SGB members are also not immune from non-attendance of school meetings. It was alleged by more than 80% of the respondents that some last attended meetings on the day they were elected. This illustrates that although they knew that they would not be able to commit themselves fully to the SGB, they were not courageous enough to decline the position. It was alleged that some parents only attended the first meeting and then disappeared until the next election three years later. The SGB are not setting a good example for the parents to emulate and are therefore part of the problem of parental non-involvement in school rather than part of the solution.

8.2.3.3 *Historical factors that militate against parental involvement in school*

Up until the promulgation of the SASA, parents were not required to involve themselves in the education of their children in the way that they are expected to now. Some teachers and parents still function according to the old paradigm of leaving education in the hands of the teacher and the school.

It was pointed out by teachers that parents do not involve themselves in school matters as a matter of principle, because when they (parents) themselves were in school, their parents were never expected to become involved in school matters. They cannot understand why that should change now.
The study also found that teachers themselves have different perceptions of parental involvement in education. There are teachers who do not expect the parents to be involved. Some of their comments were:

They (parents) are not empowered. They cannot manage or administer a school so we don't expect them to be involved. Parents have had no training in working in a school so we don't expect them to be involved.

Both the teachers and the parents have a lack of understanding of how the two parties can work together in harmony for the benefit of the children as a whole.

8.2.4 Family structures that militate against parental involvement in school

The study identified family structures that militate against involvement in school activities. The structures are discussed in the following paragraphs.

8.2.4.1 Grandmother headed households

The study found that a large number of learners live with their grandmothers because the mothers are either dead, working in town or in other provinces, or even out of the country. A number of cases were cited where the mothers got married and left home to live with their new husbands in another township, leaving their children in the care of the grandmother. Teachers admitted that they do not expect grandmothers to get involved in school activities, because of old age and their usually poor state of health. Furthermore, some schools are too far and it would be difficult for the grannies to walk a long distance to school. A case was cited of an 80-year-old grandmother who lives with and looks after HIV positive grandchildren. There was concern among some teachers that children who live with the grandmothers go to school unkempt and are for the most part undisciplined. Parental non-involvement in such cases is justifiably not deliberate.
8.2.4.2 Absent fathers

The study found that there is a family structure where the father is absent because he has multiple families and cannot live with all of them simultaneously. The children are left in the care of the mother who has to struggle to make ends meet and does not have the time to involve herself in the school activities. Some mothers work out of town or are ‘sleep-ins’ in their places of employment. If such mothers do not have their mothers to leave the children with, they leave them in the care of relatives or neighbours who cannot be bothered to involve themselves in school activities. This is also a case of justifiable non-involvement in school.

8.2.4.3 Child headed households

The study found that there are many learners who live on their own. Most of them lost their parents through death from an HIV/AIDS related disease. The eldest of the learners becomes the head of the household. In these cases, there is no adult to involve him or herself in school activities. A case was cited by teachers of Charlie Pride Primary School of children who refused to leave their home to be placed in a foster home. Their eldest brother, who is also a student at a tertiary institution, takes care of them. They receive food and other basic necessities from an NGO.

One teacher reported that a 17-year-old girl lived with and looked after her five siblings and her 18-month-old son. They lived alone, because her mother had died of HIV/AIDS after a long illness. The girl looked after her when she was too sick to do anything for herself. At the time her mother died, she was 15 and pregnant. She dropped out of school when she was in grade eight. The child confessed that it frustrated her when they had no food to eat or soap to wash the children or their clothes.

A grade one teacher from Charlie Pride Primary School related an incident of an orphan who could not be attended to at the clinic, because he was unaccompanied by an adult as per the requirement. There was no adult to accompany him. On hearing the incident, the teacher left the rest of the class unattended to take this one
child to the clinic. In such cases, nobody attends school meetings on behalf of these learners.

8.2.4.4 Child mothers

The study found that there is a family structure where the mother is a child herself and needs to be cared for. The child mothers cannot take the responsibility for their children and therefore cannot involve themselves in school.

Cooter (2006:698) avers that young mothers have well-known difficulties helping their children gain language and literacy skills. Teenage mothers as a group tend to provide less oral language stimulation than older mothers, and their children are at greater risk of school failure. This sub-group of parents needs significant support and education if its members are to positively contribute to their children’s literacy skills.

All the family structures identified above frustrate any attempts at involving parents in school.

8.2.5 Lack of teacher support by parents

The study revealed that teachers feel that parents are not making it easy for them (teachers) to perform their core duty of teaching and learning. The general feeling is that parents do not value or respect education and this rubs off onto their children. Such children are difficult to teach and so become their worst enemies. The following areas were identified by teachers and principals as areas in which parental support could make a difference if parents were more involved:

8.2.5.1 Lack of parental role modelling

Parents can play a significant role in helping the teachers at school by disciplining their children and by being good role models that their children can emulate. The study found that some learners are so undisciplined that they swear and use vulgar language which they pick up from home. One teacher said:
Parents swear at their children and the children pick it up and use it as language that is acceptable.

Naledi Pandor, National Minister of Education, posed the question (Botha, 2006:12):

*How do we expect children to conduct themselves positively if we allow ourselves to swear and have violent outbursts at home? We have to lead by example and create awareness that violence is not the answer to any problem.*

Khumalo (2008:15) also raised the issue when he commented that:

*…the poison starts at home, then spills into the streets. It gains momentum in the schoolyards where, mixed with other poisons from various homes, it ferments into something more potent, and not easy to control.*

Using the analogy of a fish that rots from the head, Khumalo notes that:

*Drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, spousal abuse, violence on the streets and in the schools, rising levels of crime, all these happen because our heads (parents) are rotting away.*

He adds that the reality is that the growing scourge has its roots at home, where parents have abdicated their responsibilities as leaders, disciplinarians and heads of the family. Khumalo believes that if a child has a proper grounding at home, s/he can transcend the happenings in the street, in his/her community, on the school playground. He quotes a saying that (Khumalo 2008:15):

*If you don’t teach your children how to behave themselves, the street will.*

Some parents are so busy making ends meet that they do not have time to discipline their children. According to one teacher, one parent confessed to her (the teacher)
that *ndoyisiwe mna ngulo mntwana* [I have given up on this child]. The child in question is in grade three and eight years old. The child’s mother leaves home early in the morning and comes home late at night. The teacher feels that the parent in question makes no attempt at disciplining the child and has simply given up on him. The responsibility to discipline learners is left to the teacher which should be a shared responsibility between the parties involved.

### 8.2.5.2 Lack of a safe environment at school

The study found that both teachers and learners do not feel safe at school. Teachers reported cases of learners who carry dangerous weapons to school and use them. A case was cited at Revelation High School, where a learner was killed by another learner at school. The researcher was at the school on the day the mother of the murderer came to report that she was withdrawing the child from the school and moving him from the town, because he was receiving threats from the murdered boy’s family. Some learners have been found to take drugs in the school’s toilets during school hours. Teachers confessed that they were never too sure whether they should search the learners’ school bags for dangerous weapons or drugs or if that would be construed as a violation of the learners’ constitutional Right to Privacy. The uncertainty leads to teachers not searching the learners or their belongings even though that makes them feel very insecure and vulnerable. The finding is corroborated by a report released by IRIN Africa (February, 2008), which is a UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In this report it is alleged that South African schools are the most dangerous in the world, and if the issue is not addressed it will stunt children’s education and jeopardize the future development of the country, according to the South African Race Relations (SAIRR). In research that was carried out by SAIRR, learners were asked if they felt safe at school, and if they had experienced incidents of stealing, bullying and injury to themselves or to others. The results of the study revealed that only 23% felt safe. The report also refers to South African media reports, which have indicated a surge in shootings, stabbings, rapes and robberies at school. The report also quotes the chairperson of the Gauteng Province National Professional teachers Association (NAPTOSA) as saying,
Violence is becoming quite a problem—we are getting more and more reports from our members. Drug use, and other substance abuse, like alcohol, is also on the rise. This means more students assault one another and now more teachers are also assaulted by learners.

Davids and Makwabe (2007:1) reported that:

South African teachers are under siege, with thousands being treated for stress and depression because they can no longer cope in the classroom. Beset by unruly and violent pupils, dismal working conditions, massive workloads and a lack of support, teachers are being booked off sick for as long as a year at a time.

The report further says that:

…depression and stress are also major reasons Eastern Cape teachers applied for long leave between June 2006 and May 2007 according to the provincial Education Department.

Violent incidents referred to include murdering or threatening to murder teachers; boys raping girls during break time and some boys beating others into submission in classrooms. The unions and experts are reported to have admitted that the harsh reality is that, generally, South African schools are not safe places. Not for learners and not for teachers (Davids & Makwabe, 2007:1).

Makwabe (2007:4) reported on specific incidents of violence in school like: when a five-month pregnant teacher was kicked in the stomach by a 15-year-old boy and gave birth to her baby two months prematurely; when a learner stabbed a teacher in the face; when a parent attacked a teacher for trying to discipline a learner who murdered his teacher for humiliating him in front of other pupils; when a learner stabbed a 14-year-old fellow pupil in the heart after an argument; when boys fight in school and injure each other.
Lobban (in Davids & Makwabe, 2007:1) is concerned that the rights of children and change in the discipline approach has had a major impact in the way learners behave towards one another and their teachers. A CEO of the Federation of SGBs of South African Schools said that:

…children found guilty of serious misconduct such as the rape and assault of a teacher, were often not expelled.

This implies that government, to some extent, plays a role in the violence in schools.

A mother in the Eastern Cape took a case of bullying to court when her son’s jaw was broken by a bully who also urinated in his (the son’s) cool drink bottle. Both learners are 14 years old (Mphande, 2007:1). The mother forced the school to put measures into place to guarantee safety in schools. Part of the bully’s tactics included cutting the victim’s school bag, stabbing him with a school compass and throwing Tippex on him.

The DoE is also aware of the lack of safety in the schools. Duncan Hindle, the Director General, is quoted in the IRIN Afrika (2008) Report to have said:

The issue of school safety is a long-standing concern of the Department, and over the past five years, numerous steps have bee taken to improve the situation, including, for example, the launch of a programme to provide some schools with fences, lighting, security guards and metal detectors.

Naledi Pandor, National Minister of Education, is also concerned about a lack of safety in the schools. She is quoted as saying (Botha, 2006:12):

It is through the creation of safe schools that we can have effective learning and that’s the only way of building success.

The Minister however admitted that (Botha 2006:12):
Although safety at schools is one of the responsibilities of the DoE, we cannot do this alone. We need to work together with the community, teachers, learners, parents and unions.

This appeal is also echoed by the teachers who feel that since the DoE has failed to provide a secure environment at schools despite the promises, parents, by their close proximity to the schools, are better placed to provide the security that is desperately needed. If they (parents) were more involved in school, they would be aware of such challenges and provide some form of security by talking to their children who were involved in such behaviours. The children are more likely to listen to their parents.

Lack of safety at school may be a thing of the past when the DoE implements teacher plans that aim at improving the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa’s 28 742 schools (Sunday Times Editorial, 2007:28). The DoE plans to amend SASA and give schools the power to search pupils for drugs and dangerous weapons, and to subject pupils to random drug testing.

This study found that schools face many serious challenges that threaten delivery of quality education. These include vandalism and theft of school property. The Chairperson of Shushu Primary School captured this situation succinctly when he said:

*Parents become part of the school only during school hours; anything that happens to the school after school hours is none of their business. When they see strange people in the school premises after school hours, it does not bother them.*

The chairperson remarked that the black person in South Africa sees schools and public places as belonging to the government and therefore not their business. That is why they will vandalize and steal from their own school. Continuing this thought, the chairperson of Build It High School indicated that learners defecate inside the classrooms. This state of affairs is challenging values in education, which should be taught and inculcated at home. One of those values is respect for property whether it
belongs to you or not. This is adequate evidence that parents are not assisting the schools by inculcating the right values at home.

Teachers of Charlie Pride Primary School pointed out that some parents are the same age as their children’s teachers. Such parents ignore invitations to the school by the teachers. Both parties (teachers and parents) feel that the other party undermines them. It was stated by some teachers that among these parents are school drop-outs who do not like to be invited back to school. This lack of partnership between parents and teachers promotes a hostile attitude between them, which does not augur well for the provision of good education.

8.2.5.3 Parents abdicating their parental role

Parents occupy a position that requires them to set the standards and lay down rules of behaviour in their homes. They are also required to play a supportive role in the school’s activities. The study found that parents have abdicated their parental roles as highlighted by the ensuing discussion.

All respondents identified absenteeism and late coming as problem areas. One teacher remarked:

*Parents leave it to their children to decide if they want to go to school or not.*

One teacher admitted that she no longer gives learners homework because that promotes absenteeism. When learners have not done their homework, they simply stay at home and the parent is not bothered. This is abdication of parental responsibility. Naidoo (2007:14) sounds a warning that:

*Education and juvenile authorities agree that juvenile offences, petty crimes and violence among learners can be attributed to the onset of bunking.*

The report also notes that:
...learners start taking drugs because they are bored while bunking and this eventually leads to offences such as robberies, muggings and hijackings.

LoveLife Chief Executive associates poor discipline, gangsters, alcohol and drug abuse with poor school attendance (Cohen, 2007:6). This suggests that when learners have bunked school, they do not just sit idly at home, but engage in anti-social behaviour. Naidoo (2007:14) advises parents to be:

...more involved in their children’s lives and monitor and supervise them closely all the way to grade twelve.

Teachers voiced concern that parents are the cause of disciplinary problems that play themselves out in class. They said some parents quarrel in front of the children. Whilst this is traumatic for children on the one hand, it causes disciplinary problems in class. Teachers felt that bullying of some learners by others is encouraged by such behaviour. Some parents were said to abuse alcohol and this leads to learning problems and disorders as well as disabilities. Teachers pointed to evidence of this where 14 year olds are still in grade three. Irrespective of where the learners live, Naledi Pandor, National Minister of Education, feels that (Botha, 2006:14):

Parents have to realize that it is not only the responsibility of the schools to teach their children but that they have a huge impact and teaching good manners starts at home.

The study also found that children born in informal settlements usually have no birth certificates. The law of the country requires that children be registered as soon as they are born. This is the responsibility of the parents who leave it until they need to apply for the social grant. Only then do they come to school to ask for the assistance of teachers to register the children. Teachers of Shushu Primary School feel that if parents involved themselves more in school, it would be easy for them (teachers) to assist with birth registration of the children at the time the learners come to register for the first time.
Another concern of teachers was 14-15 year olds who are HIV positive and who live with HIV positive parents. They postulated that children as young as 14 years have multiple boyfriends and the pregnancy rate are very high among this group. If parents took their responsibility seriously, some of these problems could be avoided. Dimbaza (2008:12) confirmed these findings in a Weekend Post report which alleged that sexual experimentation among pre-teens is putting a strain on Eastern and Southern Cape clinics and hospitals, as the surge in demand for morning-after pills in particular is alarming. The report quotes a top municipal health official in Port Elizabeth as saying that:

*Since last year, there has been a noticeable surge of minors playing Russian roulette with their lives by engaging in unprotected sex and then demanding the morning-after pill.*

The report also quotes a Duncan Village hospital (East London) staff member as saying parents have a duty to guide their children. Another official said sexual activity among minors is on the increase because parents are either failing in their duty to educate their children or they are just plain ignorant. The report quotes a clinical psychologist as saying that:

*Sex at young ages was informed by a lack of parental guidance and was most prevalent among children from economically deprived environments.*

A Port Elizabeth Childline spokesman said sex education was either absent or not being presented as intended. In this area parents are abdicating their role of educating their children about sex and sexuality. They leave their children to experiment on their own.

Eastern Cape Education MEC revealed that 5015 schoolgirls became pregnant in 2006; almost double the previous year’s figure. The youngest of these girls was 15 and in grade five (Makwabe, 2007:6). Reporting on a case of a school in the Eastern Cape that had 144 pregnant girls, the principal of the school commented that (Makwabe, 2007:6):
These kids are competing over the number of children each has and how much money they earn from this. They are poor and they want more kids.

A teacher in the same school remarked that:

Poverty, poor school discipline, gender violence and a population of increasing younger citizens are driving dramatic increases in schoolgirl pregnancies in parts of the country. There is also a high level of sexual activity in exchange for money, linked to poverty, and an increase in coercive sex among teenagers.

Another challenge of modern times is the use of cell phones in the classroom. Learners of Knowledge High School were alleged to leave the class while the teacher was teaching to answer the phone. In one incident, the teacher was taken to task by the parent for confiscating her child’s cell phone, which the learner was using in class while the teacher was teaching. This happened despite the policy of no cell phones in class. This shows a lack of parent intervention to support the teachers. The parents do not reinforce behaviours inculcated at school.

8.2.5.4 Crisis involvement

Hitherto, only non-involvement of parents has been discussed. However, the study also found that parents do involve themselves in school when there is reason good enough for them to do so. The types of involvement engaged during such instances are reactive and partial involvement.

Partial involvement entails parental involvement in some areas, but not in all. In one primary school, teachers admitted that some parents attend school functions when invited, and respond when their help is sought when for example, the school has been vandalised, but few involve themselves in the academic programme of the children or help the children with homework or even sign the children’s books. It could be assumed that such parents would be involved in all the other areas if they were capacitated in how to involve themselves.
Another type of involvement that was identified by the teachers was reactive involvement. In this kind of involvement, parents only involve themselves as a reaction to some stimulus. For example, parents were said only to involve themselves in school when their children had been punished for wrongdoings. They (parents) would then come to school to accuse us and fight with us. One teacher said parents only come to school when there is a crisis, like when learners have been caught drinking liquor during school hours on the school’s premises.

This suggests that parents would involve themselves in school if there was sufficient reason for them to do so.

8.2.6 Lack of financial support by parents

The study revealed that very few parents pay school fees. The percentages of students who pay school fees, as provided by both the principals and the teachers varied between 2% and 60%. The indication is that large numbers of parents do not support the school financially. Various reasons were advanced by all respondents for parental non-payment of school fees. One reason is that many parents are unemployed and therefore have no income.

Learners admitted that even though their parents received the social child grant, paying school fees is not a priority. They (parents) have to attend to basic necessities like food and clothing first before they can pay school fees. The learners are echoing Maslow (2008:5) who identified a hierarchy of needs, which according to him, had to be satisfied in a given order. The order was later adapted by other theorists under Maslow’s name. The adapted levels are as follows (Maslow, 2008:5):

1. Biological and physical needs - air, food, drink, warmth and sleep.
2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, and stability.
3. Belongingness and love needs - work group, family, affection and relationships.
4. Esteem needs - self-esteem, achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige and managerial responsibility.
5. **Cognitive needs** – knowledge and meaning.
6. **Aesthetic needs** – appreciation, search for beauty and balance form.
7. **Self-actualization needs** - realizing personal potential, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.

Maslow argued that needs at lower levels must be satisfied before an individual can proceed to the next level. According to him, aims and drives always shift to next higher order needs. The thwarting of needs is usually a cause of stress. Education then falls under level five - cognitive needs. Maslow’s postulation justifies the stance of the parents who do not pay school fees even though they receive a child social grant. They have to fulfil a basic need of food and clothing before cognitive needs.

Paying parents hand the money to the learners to pay the school. By their own admission, learners do not always pay the fees, but use the money for their own needs and parents never get to know about it, because they do not follow up by demanding receipts.

High school learners in the study confessed that they did not see why their parents should pay school fees, because there is no transparency in the way the money is spent. They therefore do not see the rationale for paying school fees. It is the learners who decide whether to pay the school fees or not. It could be assumed that the learners who are members of the SGB do not report back to the rest of the student body about budget issues and financial reports. It could also be assumed that the learner SGB members were never made aware of the rationale for their inclusion in the SGB. Otherwise why would the rest of the student body not know how the school spends the money? One chairperson of the SGB concurred with the learners that parents do not understand why they should pay school fees. The implication is that parents are not informed about the assistance they should give the school.

Learners of Revelation High School revealed that each of them are required to bring a ream of duplicating paper. Their school is a Section 21 school and the budget that they receive from the DoE is allegedly insufficient. To make up for inadequate funds,
the school requests learners to bring duplicating paper which learners mistakenly assume is a substitute for school fees.

Some learners admitted that their parents pay school fees towards the end of the year so that they can receive their children’s reports. This implies that the parents had the money, but that they were not interested in paying the fees at the outset.

One teacher said that she does not believe that all parents struggle to pay school fees judging by the quality of the clothes they buy and wear. She thinks they deliberately decide not to contribute anything towards the education of their children.

When the chairpersons of the SGBs were interviewed on whether the parents meet their financial contributions, one said the fees at his school is R35,00 per year, but despite the nominal amount, parents still do not pay. The perception is that the amount is not the issue. The issue is the preparedness to meet one’s financial obligation towards the school. Paying or not paying is also closely related to the culture of South Africans paying for services. One SGB chairperson mentioned that people are used to not paying municipal rates and service charges, and they treat fee paying in the same manner. Another said that there is a perception among parents that the principals and the SGBs misuse the school funds so parents do not see why they should support them. Another SGB chairperson admitted not to know what the parent’s financial obligations are. He said all he knows is that the learners should cover their books. All the chairpersons admitted that they were never engaged in fundraising activities mainly because they were not aware that this was part of their job description.

8.2.7 Lack of parent support by the DoE

The principals, teachers and chairpersons of SGBs of schools interviewed responded that the DoE was not giving the schools and the parents the support they needed in order to function optimally. The following areas were identified in which support is needed, but is not forthcoming:
8.2.7.1 *Lack of financial support for schools*

All the respondents intimated that it was announced in the media that education in South Africa is free and parents do not need to pay school fees. Parents believe what they hear. When the schools ask parents to pay school fees, the suspicion is that they (schools) are making money for themselves. The DoE is aware of such media statements, but are not doing anything to correct them. The DoE is also aware that previously disadvantaged schools are struggling to make ends meet, but does not make a concerted effort to inform parents that they have a financial obligation towards their children’s schooling. The parents are then unfairly accused of not supporting the schools financially.

Another area in which the respondents feel that they have been let down by the DoE is in the degree of responsibility that has been meted to the SGBs - that of raising funds for the schools. The complaint from the respondents is that the DoE should capacitate the parents on how to perform this duty. One teacher said, *parents need to be taught how to raise funds.*

8.2.7.2 *Lack of capacity to sustain a partnership between parents and teachers*

The study revealed that teachers feel let down by the DoE in the area of the partnership between parent and teacher. Teachers maintain that they received no training in working with parents and vice versa. The two parties were thrust together after the promulgation of the SASA (1996) and it was expected that the relationship would automatically work well. Judging by the following comments made by the teachers, that expectation did not become a reality:

*They (parents) fear the unknown.*  
*They (parents) do not come to support their children even for positive things like prize giving ceremonies.*  
*Parents have low self-esteem.’*  
*There is negligence in general.*  
*Parents cannot discipline their children because they themselves are not disciplined.*
Parents are not committed to education.
The environment has a negative effect on the parents. They drink a lot. They do not see the point in sending their children to school. They reason that they survive despite not being educated.

One teacher commented:

When the DoE introduced parental involvement in education, parents were not capacitated in how to be meaningfully involved in school. It is not our duty to train them.

Almost all the teachers interviewed said that in their teacher training days, they never received any instruction, formal or informal, in how to involve parents in their teaching. Another teacher said:

We were never prepared to work with parents. The DoE first introduced the concept of parent involvement but never followed up with training.

A few teachers admitted that during their teacher training days, there was a section on parental involvement in education. However, this did not prepare them for the type of society they live and function in, nor are they skilled for the type of learners they are presented with. They claim that, that which appears in the books is meant for an ideal, normal society. They said parents of today do not discipline their children and rely on the teachers to do so, because they (the parents) are overwhelmed by their children’s behaviour. The skills that they received from the books have become redundant, something which the DoE never foresaw.

8.2.7.3 Relations between the SGB and teachers

The SGB is not only the support structure for school governance, but it is ideally a link between the parents and the school, specifically the teachers. For these two parties to work well together for the good of the children, there needs to exist a relationship of trust and respect between them. However the study found that the
relationship that exists between these parties is not always good. For example, the chairperson of Build It High School said:

_The teachers undermine the authority of the SGB._ He said _the pass rate in the school is low because ootitshala abalawuleki [the teachers are ungovernable]._

He (the chairperson) believed that the teachers adopted this attitude towards him because he is uneducated. He alleged that teachers at the school told him that the school is not a prison and neither is he a prison warder. They (the teachers) are employed by the DoE and are protected by Labour Law. The chairperson alleged that the SGB feels abused by the teachers and needs protection from the DoE.

According to the chairperson of another school, relations between them and the teachers are not always good. He alleged that the teachers do as they please and when he tries to intervene, they tell him that they never signed a contract with the SGB but with the DoE and can therefore not be reprimanded by the SGB. According to the teachers, the SGB governs the school, not the teachers.

The chairperson of Horseradish Primary School remarked that the teachers were just too clever to tell the SGB everything. Another chairperson was concerned that teachers only attend meetings when it suits them.

The relations described above are regrettably untenable, and the DoE as employer should have foreseen these clashes and been proactive in avoiding them. The status quo described above indicates that there is some induction that the DoE should have undertaken instead of leaving it to the parties concerned to figure out how they should relate to each other and what the roles of each are in that relationship.

Teachers indicated that the SGB is part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Terms that the teachers used to describe the SGB are:

_They are not functional at all._
They are not helping the schools as they should.
The SGB are bureaucratic and posing as watchdogs.
They only look for negative things.
Most SGB members do not attend meetings at all. We last saw them on the day they were elected and we have never seen them again.
I do not even know who the SGB members are. I have only seen the Chairperson and one other member.
They are not capacitated and lack in skills to be involved. They do not come up with ideas on how to raise funds.
They disappear.
They are not enthusiastic.

The SGB chairpersons were asked if they were ever capacitated to perform their functions. The findings revealed that of the ten chairpersons that were interviewed, only 50% had received training in some aspect of school management. This was organized by the DoE for a group of chairpersons without paying any attention to individual needs. For example:

• One chairperson admitted to having received training in how to draw up a policy for the school.
• Another attended a workshop on how to understand the SASA.
• Another attended a workshop on budgeting and the management of petty cash.
• Another attended a workshop on how to maintain working relationships with other stakeholders.
• Another attended a workshop in which a group of chairpersons were given case studies to solve in their groups.

This can hardly be called capacity building because SGBs are expected to function in all areas of the school’s governance.

When chairpersons do not know what they are expected to do, they are left at the mercies of the principal to decide how to use them. For example, the chairperson of
Horseradish Primary School was told by the principal that her duty was to chair meetings. She thought to herself that that was not adequate work and took it upon herself to visit the school to *establish if the teachers were teaching*. She admitted that she was not sure if that was the right or the wrong approach to adopt. She informed the interviewer that she did not understand why latecomers should be allowed in class. According to her, latecomers should be sent home to teach them and their parents a lesson. If the principal allowed that to happen, it would be a violation of the learners’ constitutional right to learn. This shows the danger of leaving the SGBs to figure out how they involve themselves in the school activities.

Another chairperson said they (SGB) took instructions from the principal on what needed to be done, how and when.

The SGB chairperson of Shushu Primary School said he had been chairperson of the same school for five terms but had never been workshopped on the roles and functions of the SGB. They (SGB) *were guided by the needs of the school*.

### 8.2.8 Lack of learner support services

For effective teaching and learning to take place, a supportive environment needs to be guaranteed. This ideally should be guaranteed by a partnership between the school and other community support services such as the police, health, social and psychological services, etc. None of the schools had learner support services, which is a cause of great concern for the learners, the SGB and the school. A story was related at Revelation High School of a learner who was shot dead during school hours as mentioned earlier. It is believed that such incidents only happen because while there is lack of security in the schools, there is also lack of support from police and social services in the area. In this incident, the police were summoned but it took a long time before they responded. The principal said the delayed response is understandable because police services in the townships are stretched to the limit and they do not have sufficient transport.

Teachers in one high school confessed to having been warned by some learners to watch what they say to learners in class and how they say it because learners could
be dangerous when they are high on drugs, which they take in the toilets on the school’s premises. The teachers feel vulnerable, but have no support services to assist them.

Another finding was that learners who are HIV positive do not have easily accessible health and social support services in the school. Teachers in one school estimated the number of infected learners at a minimum of 30 learners per year. This number includes 14-year-olds or grade eights. A number of teachers in different schools intimated that they felt frustrated when they saw a learner suffering, but were not able to do anything to help especially in cases where the learners have not voluntarily disclosed their HIV status. They watch helplessly when a learner gets thinner and thinner until s/he eventually drops out of school, as she/he has no more energy to continue. If school nurses were attached to schools, such incidents would be taken care of professionally. Teachers cannot deal with such things. One teacher confessed to breaking down and crying when she sees such suffering.

Another concern emphasized by teachers is that girls are promiscuous and fall pregnant at an alarming rate. An incident was narrated of a learner who went into labour while writing the matriculation examinations in 2006. They (teachers) also attribute this occurrence to a lack of support services for the schools. If nurses were attached to the school, it would be routine to ensure that this did not happen.

Teachers were also concerned that they are not equipped to deal with grade one learners who have sex in the toilets, as was the case at Woodbundle Primary School. That is the work of a professional who deals with abnormal behaviour, which is believed to be copied from home.

All schools incorporated in the study are mostly populated by learners from informal settlements. Teachers believe that the environment from which the learners come is hostile and there is no parental involvement in education. It was also intimated that in the township shebeens, there are no restrictions as to who could buy liquor and who not. Liquor is even freely available to learners. Admittedly, there is a law in South Africa that prohibits the sale of liquor to under-age children. However, there is not adequate manpower to enforce it. The shebeen owners then violate the law with
impunity, because they know that nothing will happen to them. This then leaves the responsibility of ensuring that learners do not visit shebeens on the shoulders of parents and the school.

The teachers were also concerned about learners who live by themselves without parents. These learners fall easy prey to whoever would want to harm them. At night there is no security at their homes, and girls are easy prey. Teachers attribute the high pregnancy rate amongst girls to the inadequate security system.

Learners are robbed of their money on their way to and from school. Teachers accused the learners of having friends outside school who bring drugs onto the school’s premises during school hours. A lack of social support services impacts negatively on teaching and learning.

Teachers believe that the lack of support services leads to crimes such as robberies and housebreaking. Learners were said to come to school drunk as early as 08:00 in the morning after a long weekend. Such behaviour could be prevented if there was a police presence on the premises.

8.3 SUMMARY

The study sought to investigate the extent of involvement of black parents in the education of their children. Data was collected through one-on-one interviews with principals and chairpersons of SGBs or their representatives of the ten schools that constituted the sample. Data was also collected through focus group interviews with teachers and learners of the same schools.

Categories were created to represent the data and were discussed in depth. The study found that to a large extent, black parents do not involve themselves in the education of their children, sometimes for reasons beyond their control. Such reasons include illiteracy, poverty and the inability of the parents to provide learners with a supportive environment conducive to learning. It was also found that poverty impacts on the ability of the parents to attend parent meetings and also informs their attitudes towards their children's school and schooling in general. As a result of the
parents' negative attitudes towards school and schooling, teachers do not get the support they need especially with regard to parents inculcating the right values by modelling them.

Another finding was that there are family structures among black parents that militate against parental involvement in education. These include households that are headed by grandmothers or children themselves. There were households where the father figure was missing. It was established that there is a relationship between the type of family structure and learner behaviour. Where there is no authority figure, children behave badly.

Schools depend on money. The study found that both the parents and the DoE do not provide adequate financial support to schools to enable them to function efficiently and effectively. Lack of funding in schools compromises the quality of teaching and learning.

The study also found that the SGBs do not have the capacity to perform the functions for which they were created. In most cases they were not even aware of their functions and responsibilities. On the other hand, teachers also did not have the capacity to work with parents.

For learners to perform optimally, they need a supportive environment conducive to learning. However, the study found that most black parents are not able to provide such an environment due to poverty, illiteracy and illnesses.

The next chapter will discuss recommendations for the alleviation of the situation and identify possible measures that schools could adopt to facilitate parental involvement in education.
CHAPTER NINE
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The study sought to investigate the extent of involvement of black parents in the education of their children as envisaged in SASA. Data was collected through interviews with the principals, teachers, learners and the Chairpersons of the SGBs of the schools that formed the sample. The study found that parents in general do not involve themselves in school as envisaged. However, the study also found that parents do involve themselves under certain circumstances; for example, in areas where they feel needed and are comfortable to involve themselves and also when they think that their children have been treated unfairly. This suggests that parents do involve themselves if there is reason enough for them to do so.

The study identified areas in which parents can make a difference if they involved themselves more in school. It identified not only areas in which parents can be involved, but also strategies to involve themselves. Parents can either involve themselves in school activities at school or they can play an active role in supporting their children’s education at home. Parents can also support education indirectly by the way they live and behave in front of their children. All this cannot happen automatically. It requires a concerted effort to capacitate all the stakeholders involved. The principals and the teachers need to be made aware of the need to involve parents in schools and the benefits thereof. The chairpersons of the SGBs need to be familiar with the provisions of the SASA and be capacitated to play their roles and carry out their responsibilities well. Learners and parents also need to be made aware that parent involvement is a requirement and not an option and needs their co-operation.

Recommendations based on the findings will be discussed below.
9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS AT MICRO-LEVEL

9.2.1 Building home-school relationships

The study found that parents generally do not attend parent meetings at the child’s school even when invited to do so. Blankstein (2004:173) postulates that for schools to function effectively, there needs to exist sound relationships between home and school. He, however, cautions that this does not and cannot happen automatically or easily but needs to be consciously cultivated. He then recommends three key principles to building home-school relationships. The principles will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

9.2.1.1 Building a mutual understanding and empathy

The first principle he recommends is building mutual understanding and empathy by creating an awareness of specific conditions that affect many families and which make it difficult for them to support their children’s learning (Blankstein, 2004:173). Teachers have to recognize that many parents have had negative experiences with school and are afraid to become involved. They (parents) may be intimidated by feelings of ignorance and uncertainty. It then becomes imperative that teachers help parents overcome such feelings by creating schedules, policies and programmes that take into account learners’ home challenges. This study found that most parents are illiterate and/or poor and some households are headed by grandmothers or single mothers. Such factors make it difficult, if not impossible, for such parents to get involved in the school’s activities. A teacher who understands the learner’s home situation will be more sympathetic and accommodating of such children.

9.2.1.2 Welcome parents in the school

Blankstein also argues that the best way to ensure effective parental involvement in the school is to ensure that parents are made to feel welcome in the school, thereby obviating the misconception that schools do not want them (parents) to be part of school (2004:172). He recommends the following strategies for encouraging meaningful parental involvement:
• The first strategy is the establishment of a parent-to-parent outreach that contacts all parents to establish what they could contribute to student learning.
• The second strategy is inviting parents and community members in to provide leadership for extra-curricular clubs based on special interest, for example cultural events, sporting activities, drama, etc.
• The third strategy is to actively recruit parents. Blankstein suggests that part of reaching out is simply making staff members visible in community events like funerals, weddings, kitchen parties, circumcision parties, church, and so on. Teachers could then campaign for parents to get to school whenever and wherever they see them. This, in essence, implies that parents need to be recruited to the school and recruiting them is not an activity restricted to specific hours at specific places; rather it is a constant, ongoing process that encompasses every interaction with every parent. An example is provided of a school that organized a dance at which the learners’ “price of admission” was to bring a parent.

Blankstein (2004:177) further recommends that “if you feed them, they will come.” This strategy would be effective especially among poor parents who may have their last meal of the day at school.

9.2.1.3 “Bring the mountain to Mohammed”

It is realized that inviting and recruiting parents may not necessarily always be successful with all parents. Hence Blankstein (2004:177) further recommends “bringing the mountain to Mohammed”. This means providing information about school activities and events to the community in places where the parents are. It is recommended that to communicate important information to the parents, the schools may need to meet the parents in neutral places like the community centres where it is less threatening for them. It may be at the headman’s house where the community *imbizo* (community gatherings) is held. It is especially compulsory for all the men to attend the *imbizo*. Most parents are regular church goers. An announcement could be made in church if that could be arranged with the responsible Minister. The idea
there is to go to where the parents are instead of inviting them to the school where the atmosphere may be threatening for them.

Members of the school community are also members of the bigger community. Teachers meet the parents in the community for example, at the local shop, at funerals, at community events like weddings or imigidi (circumcision parties) or even in town. Whenever the principal or the teachers meet the parents, information has to be relayed. The implication here is that teachers need to know the children’s parents and take an interest in them. Parents in turn need to respect the teachers and hold them in high esteem as people who are shaping their children’s future. To reach parents where they are or where they could be found would require the schools to go beyond their call of duty to convey the message to them. Every opportunity to address the parents should be utilized profitably.

Building home-school relationships assumes that both parties understand what the relationship entails. DuFour (in Blankstein, 2004:185) notes that there is a strong tendency for teachers and administrators to define parent/school relationships in very strict terms, that is, the school should make the decisions, and parents should support those decisions unquestioningly. Blankstein (2004:185) regards such a partnership as one-sided which is not only less appealing to parents, but also less beneficial to the school do as a whole. Research shows that schools enjoy higher levels of both public support and student achievement when they involve parents in the decision-making process (Blankstein, 2004:185). Some teachers in the study indicated that they did not understand why parents should be involved in school activities in the first place and would prefer them not to be involved. The implication here is that they do not understand SASA and do not appreciate the rationale for involving parents. It is recommended that the DoE take it upon themselves to workshop all stakeholders involved in the school on the rationale behind working together for the benefit of the children.

9.2.2 Communication with parents

Blankstein (2004:185) notes that many schools mistakenly believe that communication flows only in one direction - from teachers to parents. This sentiment
was also echoed by learners during interviews when they noted that it is the teachers who want to communicate with parents and not the other way around. Meaningful communication must be two-way, constantly alternating between informing and listening. Teachers could make that a reality if they introduce interactive modes of communication including, but not limited to, suggestion boxes located in key locations around the community, parent surveys and direct phone calls to ask parents for feedback and input. Although the latter is a good strategy, calling parents may be problematic and expensive and beyond the affordability levels of some poor schools as was indicated by principals and teachers during interviews. Besides, very few poor parents own telephones.

9.2.3 Parent involvement at home

Teachers in the study lamented that the discipline they try to inculcate in school is not reinforced by parents at home. The Child Development Institute (2006:1) labels such parents as lax and permissive. From research conducted by the Institute, lax parenting was found to be strongly associated with erratic sleep patterns among children who were otherwise well. Children of lax parents did not get enough rest, and as a result, had negative temperaments, were highly emotional at times and exhibited behavioural problems. Parents were said to give in to children, allowing rules to go unenforced, and providing positive consequences for bad behaviour. They were also found not to set limits or enforce rules consistently.

Learners who do not sleep well cannot absorb much of what is taught in class. Inadequate sleep may reduce highly intelligent children to mediocrity. Lax parents may not be aware of the psychological and mental problems they are responsible for among their children. It then becomes imperative that they are made aware of the negative impact their laxity has on their children’s school performance. Parents could make a positive contribution in this regard if they were aware of these facts. It is recommended that schools organize workshops for parents and invite school nurses and child psychologists to address parents on the relationship between good health habits and school performance.
This study also found that parents do not provide their children with an environment that is conducive to learning and studying because the homes are smaller and therefore there is less space. Learners complained about their parents watching television while they (learners) were trying to study and not making sure that their siblings do not make a noise. One mother was quoted as saying that the learner is not the first person to ever study. The Child Development Institute (2006:2) notes that less noise at home makes for better adjusted kids. A study conducted by a Purdue University Professor of psychological sciences (Child Development Institute, 2006:2) suggests that parents wanting to help their children adjust to life’s stresses may want to turn down the noise in their house. The only way of addressing the issue would be for teachers to take the matter up with the parents.

Furthermore, illiterate or working parents may not be able to help their children with homework. Blankstein (2004:185) recommends setting up community-based homework support where literate parents or local students attending a tertiary institution could be encouraged to volunteer to help in the afternoons or weekends at a community center or local library near them. Parents could be invited to these sessions and be shown how best to help their children with homework.

9.2.4 Community support services

Children need someone to confide in, aside from their teachers, who are caught up with their duties to deal with children’s problems. The guidance teachers fulfilled this role until the DoE decided they were no longer needed. This left a void, which was never filled. There is also a need for counsellors to help senior learners make the right career choices. Commenting on the type of student who is admitted to university for the first time, Ruth (2000:195) says, “it is clear that students do not get sufficient guidance and information about subjects, disciplines, educational institutions and careers and this problem begins in school. Many students who want to, and maybe could, succeed in doing certain degrees, can’t because they have been trapped in the wrong stream”. As a consequence of a lack of guidance, Ruth (ibid) found that students based subject choices on “who teaches the subject”.

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The study also found that there are no community support structures in the schools like the school nurses to attend to the health related matters like HIV/AIDS, TB, or premarital pregnancies.

It is recommended that in cases where there is no school nurse attached to the school, the school arrange with the clinic nurses to visit the school to address the learners on matters that the learners themselves raise. Whenever possible, the nurses could also bring posters with the information and display them in classrooms or in the passages where learners are likely to see them. The same posters could be displayed in church halls and public places that both parents and learners visit.

Recognizing that many obstacles to academic achievement are caused by family problems and community breakdown, strong school leaders create and maintain close ties with law enforcement and service agencies to minimize disruption of children's academic progress (Blankstein, 2004:177). For example, children from child-headed households or granny headed households can be moved to temporary shelters but not to new schools. The child protection unit of the South African Police Services could be invited to give parents advice on safety and security issues.

Communities could also reach out to their local business community. Local businesses have a considerable stake in the quality of graduates that the schools produce, and they are often quite willing to contribute their time, expertise, guidance and funding (Blankstein, 2004:177). In the absence of guidance teachers, it is recommended that schools invite local business people to address learners on the demands of the market so that learners are able to make informed choices.

9.2.5 Home visits

This study found that teachers do not, as a matter of practice, visit the parents at their homes. During interviews, one learner pointed out that their teachers do not care about them because they do not visit them at their homes to establish why they do not go to school. An example was made of a learner who was sick for a long time and consequently died, but teachers did not visit him at home. This study also found
that teachers accused parents of letting their children choose when to go to school or not.

It is understandable that teachers have heavy teaching loads and cannot afford to pay home visits after school (when they have to do marking and prepare for the next day). Parents may interpret a lack of home visits as a lack of interest in them (parents), and regard teachers as living in ivory towers. Home visits may be the answer to the challenges outlined above. Teachers who have problem learners in their classes could benefit by visiting the homes of such children.

The Child Development Institute (2006:1) also notes that a tug of war rages between parents and the teachers where a learner skips one school day after another and the principal and the teachers blame the parents for not disciplining their children. The situation is exacerbated when the two parties involved do not discuss the matter, but instead apportion blame on each other. A home visit would provide the teacher with an opportunity to address issues of concern like late coming and absenteeism. The parents would be more likely to co-operate with a teacher who is perceived to show interest in them and their children.

9.2.6 Establishing a values-based education

The study found that some learners engage in unsavoury behaviour, which is evidenced by learners taking drugs even during school hours, using vulgar language which they allegedly they imitate from their parents, and also engaging in anti-social behaviour like bullying. Girls have been found to be falling pregnant at an alarming rate. Parents and the communities have been accused of not caring [abakhathali] and not valuing education. Teachers have found these behaviours to be disturbing and undermining their core business of teaching and learning.

Arweck and Nesbitt (2004:248) argue that such behaviour can be prevented if the schools based their education on values. Values-based education is also called character education or moral development. Halstead (in Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004:248) defines values as principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards of life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as reference points in
decision making or the evaluation of beliefs or action and address the four dimensions namely, self, relationships, society and the environment. Values-based education takes a holistic view of the person and recognizes that an individual is comprised of physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions; therefore, it seeks to provide guiding principles and tools for the development of the person.

Breidlid (2003:83) defines values as “…concepts, thoughts about things, and not things themselves… In this sense a people’s social values are their ideas, and ideals, relating to their kinship institutions, their economic relations, their political system and so on”. Citing the Manifesto, Breidlid (2003:93) stresses the importance of “the values that we cherish and live by, values that give meaning to our individual and social relationships, even our solitary spiritual journeys and our intellectual and imaginative excursions”. Stressing the importance of values, Hayward (2007:29) adds that “besides knowledge and skills, learners need to be imbued with core values by which to live their lives. A society that has moral values is a society that is hardworking, honest and humane.

Arweck and Nesbitt (2004:248) identify the following 12 values that are claimed to be universally acceptable and should be promoted in individuals in order to make the world (and school) a better place eventually: peace, respect, love, tolerance, honesty, humility, co-operation, responsibility, happiness, freedom, simplicity and unity. Hayward (2007:30), however, identifies five basic values and argues that each of the five have related values. He tabulates the values as follows:
### Table 9.1: Basic human values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRUTH</th>
<th>LOVE</th>
<th>PEACE</th>
<th>RIGHT ACTION</th>
<th>NON-VIOLENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Calmness</td>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>Appreciate other cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Brotherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>Dignity</td>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>Devotion</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Duty</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Endurance</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Concern for all life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-analysis</td>
<td>Helpfulness</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Good behaviour</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-knowledge</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Inner silence</td>
<td>Healthy living</td>
<td>Good manners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Helpfulness</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Service to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-respect</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Unity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Hayward, 2007:30)

Arweck and Nesbitt (2004:248) postulate that the aims of teaching values-based education are:

- To help the individual think about and reflect on different values and the practical implications of expressing them in relation to themselves, others, the community, and the world at large.
- To deepen understanding, motivation, and responsibility with regard to making personal and social choices.
- To inspire individuals to choose their own personal, social, moral and spiritual values and be aware of practical methods for developing and deepening them.
- To encourage educators and caregivers to look at education as providing students with a philosophy of living, thereby facilitating their own growth, development and choices so they may integrate themselves into the community with respect, confidence and purpose.
The values are a response to the call for values in a world in which children are affected by violence, social problems, and lack of respect for one another and the world around them. They are also a response to parents and educators who want help in countering such trends. Values are a way of encouraging children and young people to explore the social and personal dimensions of the values and to apply such insights both in the school and home environment.

Arweck and Nesbitt (2004:248) report positive effects of values-based education. Learners are said to behave with greater respect and co-operation both towards their peers and the adults in their lives and towards their own and other people's property.

If a school adopted values-based education, the principal would need to play a key role in deciding whether to adopt values education and to point out the values policy when recruiting new staff. S/he would also need to ensure buy-in from staff in order to influence subject teaching and general behaviour in school. Notices and posters around the school would need to point to the values approach in the school. Certain rules that state how to deal with one another and how to treat school property would need to be stated. Values could also be inculcated in physical, social, and health education and in meetings. In some subjects, values can be included implicitly, either by reference to what was said in assembly or in values lessons or by relating someone’s behaviour to a value. A school could either use a given set of values or develop its own set of values.

Individual schools could be left to decide which values to start with or one school could make one value the theme of the month. Values could be conveyed and reinforced in assemblies through songs, stories, the exploration of the value in a brief question-and-answer session with the children, and concluded by a couple of minutes of reflection.

Arweck and Nesbitt (2004:254) warn, however, that although values are universal, it can be expected that some teachers may be unwilling or reluctant to teach them or there may be inconsistencies in the behaviour of teachers or adults in general. Diversity can also be expected among the parents and the SGB. It is, however,
recommended that everyone would need to find their own values before they can teach them.

The commitment of the principal and the SMT would be important in introducing, implementing, and maintaining values-based education in the school. Hayward (2007:30) suggests that people in any organization would need to ask themselves the following questions:

- Does the school have a set of core values?
- Are the values in written form for reference purposes?
- Does everyone understand the meaning of each value?
- Does the organization live daily by these values?

A study presented at the American Psychological Association’s (APA) 105th Annual Convention (Child development Institute, 2006:3) found that frequency of eating family meals together more often prevents teen adjustment problems and teens are less likely to take drugs and are simultaneously more motivated to attend school. Despite their busy schedules, working mothers need to be advised by the teachers to consider eating together with their children as many times as they can. This would hopefully bring about an improvement in the children’s motivation and behaviour.

In a study conducted by a Yale Professor and collaborators (Child Development Institute, 2006:4), it was found that students who do well in school are least likely to smoke, drink alcohol, use drugs and have unsafe sex, while those students classified as “burnouts” are most likely to indulge in risky behaviour. This places the onus on the teachers to prevent such unsavoury behaviour by making sure that they (teachers) go out of their way to ensure a high standard of teaching and learning where all students are winners and there are no burnouts.
## 9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS AT MACRO-LEVEL

### 9.3.1 Alleviating poverty

The study found that poverty militated against parental involvement. Some parents are too poor to provide their children with basic necessities like food, drink, warmth, and shelter. It was also found that parents who received child social grants do not use them for the purpose for which they were intended and justifiably so considering Maslow’s hierarchy of needs mentioned earlier.

A study was conducted to establish why first year university students drop out of university (Naidoo, 2008). Seventy percent of the study’s respondents came from extremely poor families whose monthly income was between R400 and R1 600. The results revealed a lack of finances as the main reason for 60% of students quitting university. In the same study it was revealed that students struggled to focus on their studies if they do not have enough money to feed themselves.

A poor student was quoted as saying (Naidoo, 2008) “It’s very difficult for my parents. They try as hard as they can, but they don’t earn enough to cover the fees for the year. I have no one to turn to.” Most learners and students regard education as their passport out of poverty. However, the above studies reveal that once a learner is caught up in a poverty cycle, it can be near impossible to climb out without assistance.

The above argument demonstrates that providing poor parents with child social grants does not help the parents pay school fees. It does not help the schools get the funding to support the school to function efficiently. Something else needs to be done. The DoE introduced no fee paying schools where parents do not need to pay school fees. The problematic issue relating to this arrangement is that many poor learners do not live close enough to these schools and cannot take advantage of that arrangement. Principals from some of these schools were interviewed and asked the extent to which they believed this system worked. It was found that schools only receive their allocation long after the year commenced. One principal said his school received their allocation in July. By implication, the school could not function before
that time. Since parents are aware that they are not supposed to pay fees, it is not an option to ask them for money.

It is recommended that all previously disadvantaged schools be declared no fee paying schools and that the DoE work towards providing the money in good time. This would also address the fear of some parents not wanting to go to their children’s schools for fear of being exposed that they have not paid school fees. Parental involvement would then improve.

For child grant holders, it is recommended that a portion of the grant be paid directly into the school funds instead of paying the whole amount to the parents and expecting them to, in turn, pay the school fees. Whatever would be paid into the parent’s bank account would be for use at home.

9.3.2 Strategy to enforce compulsory school attendance

The SASA (Section 3(1)) stipulates that every parent must cause every learner for whom s/he is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The DoE set in place measures to ensure that children attend school. For example, Section 3(5) of the SASA says, “If a learner who is subject to compulsory attendance in terms of Sub-section (1) is not enrolled or fails to attend school, the Head of Department (HoD) may be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months”. In spite of this provision, children still stay away from school and nothing happens to the HoD. The implication is that this law is difficult to enforce. The carrot-and-stick approach would work better by benefiting the parents of school going children.

To help poor parents and the HoD make compulsory school attendance a reality, the Department of Social Welfare pays a social grant for all children from ages 0-15. Despite that provision, South Africa still sees children begging on street corners at a time when they should be in school. This implies that the social grant is not used for
the purpose for which it is meant and justifiably so. It also implies that the HoD does not follow up to enforce the Act or the Act is unenforceable.

It is recommended that to ensure that learners attend school; schools be required to send copies of learners’ progress reports or class schedules every semester to the Department of Social Welfare. If no report were received, it would be assumed that the learner dropped out of school prematurely and the parents would not get the grant. This would force parents to ensure that their children went to school. This arrangement would benefit the schools, the parents and the HoD. Schools would fill up with learners and therefore attract more money allocation. South Africa would be rid of child street beggars who are an embarrassment to the country.

9.3.3 Parents as entrepreneurs

Poor parents buy school uniforms for their children at no discount. School uniforms tend to be expensive and beyond affordability of poor parents. To buy a grade one girl learner a skirt, white shirt, jersey, shoes and socks at a cheap store (Pep Stores) costs R206,00 (prices as at February 2008). For a poor parent that is a lot of money.

It is recommended that the DoE enforce a uniform policy where parents of the school make their own school uniforms for their children. Making uniforms does not require parents to be literate or wealthy. The parents could work through a learnership either privately sponsored or sponsored by the DoE. The sponsor could buy sewing machines and knitting machines for each poor school (or use the Home Economics machines in schools where this subject is offered). The parents would each buy material for their own children. They would then form a co-operative, get a volunteer seamstress (or the Home Economics teacher where applicable) to teach them how to cut and measure and make the uniform. They would then be able make uniforms for their children. It works out much cheaper than buying a ready-made uniform and it gives the parent a life-long skill. Jerseys can either be hand knitted or machine knitted. Learners who are old enough to sew could make their own uniform. When all the children in the school have a uniform, parents could contract themselves to make uniforms for the even well-off schools and get money to supplement the government child grant. The project would be sustainable, because it could extend
to community sports uniforms, community church choir uniforms and community church uniforms. Fathers could engage in carpentry, painting, and plumbing jobs for the school. From time to time, desks, doors and windows need to be repaired and leaking taps need to be fixed. They would offer their services free to their school, but charge for services rendered in the community. This project would also be sustainable.

One of the responsibilities of the SGB is fund-raising. The venture described above would make enough money for the school.

9.3.3.1 Parents ‘owning’ the feeding schemes

In 1994, the DoE established the primary school feeding scheme to provide sustenance to poverty-stricken children in their critical growing years, but also to provide them with a major incentive to attend school, allowing them to focus on their lessons. The Eastern Cape is one of the poorest regions in South Africa, and the children in the province depend heavily on the school feeding scheme (George, 2007:4). In 2007, the DoE allocated R230 million for a new feeding scheme initiative in the 2006/07 financial year, where the local community co-operatives would prepare and serve hot meals to the poor children. The entire project disintegrated because of fraud and widespread corruption and the MEC for Education suspended it (George, 2007:4). For some poor children this was their only source of food. The DoE then reverted back to the old scheme of using suppliers to deliver bread to schools and parent volunteers to come and cut the bread and serve the children.

From visiting schools when interviews were conducted, it transpired that sometimes the suppliers do not always deliver as expected for various reasons. The study also found that even when the bread was delivered, some parents of the school, although unemployed, are sometimes not willing to come and prepare the food because there is nothing for them. The implication here is that they would be more willing to assist if they received free food.

It is recommended that poor unemployed parents be contracted by the DoE to supply their school with freshly baked bread everyday and be paid for the service. While
they would be feeding their own children, they would also be making money for themselves and their schools. Parents could use the school garden to produce the vegetables they prepare for the children. In the process, parents would learn something about agronomy, soil science and food production as well as weather patterns that allow for the production of certain crops. The left over produce could be sold to generate income for both the school and the parents. Parents would be taught managerial skills, financial management skills, human resource management and project management. The principle of teaching them to fish instead of giving them a fish would apply here.

9.3.4 Counteracting illiteracy

The study found that teachers, learners, the SGB chairpersons, and the principals cited illiteracy as one reason parents do not involve themselves in school activities. Cooter (2006:701) believes that there is much that teachers can do to assist illiterate parents to help their children become successful readers. She advises that teachers have to respect illiterate parents as their first and best teacher.

Cooter (2006:698) cites a strategy that has been tried and failed to bring illiterate or semiliterate parents to functional literacy in time to help their own children. She admits that 50-75% of adults annually enrolled in literacy programmes drop out within the first month, citing as reason for dropping out job requirements, cultural beliefs, time pressures, lack of financial resources, paucity of services and travel constraints. This suggests that other strategies to assist illiterate parents to help their children read at home should be sought. Illiteracy should neither be a stumbling block nor an excuse for not helping their children at home.

Cooter (2006:698) further postulates that children of parents living at the poverty level typically have fewer words spoken to them in their homes. Specifically, less educated, lower income parents talk even less and use fewer differentiated words than do those in other socio-economic classes. She then suggests the following strategies which teachers could adopt to help struggling mothers succeed in helping their children to become avid readers.
9.3.4.1  **Emphasize strengths**

Cooter (2006:698) recommends that teachers help illiterate mothers identify ways they can use the skills they possess, other funds of knowledge to become successful “home literacy teachers”. She cites earlier research which found that parents’ educational levels, literacy abilities and language proficiency were not factors in their ability to support their children’s reading development. There are clear, effective, and relatively simple ways reading teachers can assist illiterate parents in building their child’s future literacy that are not dependent on their own reading abilities. She suggests that literacy educators concentrate on what parents can do within their socio-cultural contexts as much as they do with children in reading instruction. They should emphasize their strengths as literacy partners.

9.3.4.2  **Promote dialogic reading**

Dialogic reading means picture book reading. Cooter (2006:699) explains that the child directs and leads a conversation around the pictures of a book; the parent listens to the child talk, uses “what” questions, and rephrases and extends the child’s utterances, but remains the follower in the dialogue at all times. Cooter, (2006:699) observed that dialogic reading seems to have the best result in improving the length of children’s sentences, specifically so if gestures are added. This strategy is also suitable for parents who have limited English skills. The parent can partner with her child in the dialogic reading using the book as a tool. Cooter (*ibid*) recommends teachers to help the parents to engage with their child in this child-led dialogue.

9.3.4.3  **Increase mean length of utterance**

Increasing the mean length of utterance refers roughly to the number of words spoken together by child and parent (Cooter, 2006:699). She postulates that the number of words spoken together is predictive of a young child’s later language development. When parents speak in longer word chains or more complex sentences, children tend to imitate and create longer sentences as well. Simply giving children models and opportunities to lengthen and elaborate sentences
significantly increases their oral language development with low-income urban settings. Teachers would need to workshop parents on how to achieve this.

9.3.4.4 Talk and play

Cooter (2006:700) concedes that the size of a child’s vocabulary is a strong predictor of school success. When parents set time aside to talk to children, there can be a long-term positive effect on academic literacy development. Supportive play involving mothers and fathers increases positive language gains in their children.

Petersen, Jesso and McCabe (in Cooter, 2006:700) found that simply encouraging low-income parents to talk to their children at length everyday; having children tell their own narratives to their parents-significantly increased the children’s vocabulary. The children of the mothers who used complex vocabulary also used more complex words and sentence structures. Children who practiced at home were found to talk more comfortably in front of the class and seemed to use more complex and novel words in description when they prepared at home.

9.3.4.5 Make-believe-alouds

Reading aloud to children is one of the most common recommendations that literacy experts and agencies make as a preparation for academic success. But if the parents cannot read, read-alouds can be reframed as simple make-believe alouds. Here, a parent does not have to know words on the page to construct a fanciful story about the picture, nor does story telling about a book have to be exactly the same for each retelling. Morgan and Goldstein (in Cooter, 2006:701) found that teaching low socio-economic status mothers to use a storybook fancifully and imaginatively with their young children increased the type and quality of language in child-parent interaction.

9.3.4.6 Magazines, comics and catalogues

Cooter (2006:701) made the observation that books may not readily be available in the home, but many families have access to magazines, comics or catalogues. In
Port Elizabeth where the study was conducted, there are free newspapers and magazines that get delivered to each household weekly. Simply engaging children in conversations using this variety of texts and pictures can stimulate language, vocabulary and storytelling.

The above strategies show that parents do not need to be educated or literate in order to help their children succeed. The challenge to this recommendation would be the availability and the willingness of the teachers to engage the parents in the ways recommended. It has been intimated earlier in this study that teachers’ workloads in the previously disadvantaged schools tend to be heavy and the classes overcrowded. In such circumstances, teachers may not find the time to engage with parents. The solution to the challenge would be for the DoE to pay the teachers a stipend during holidays to engage the parents in the ways described above. It is doubtful if the teachers would be willing to sacrifice their hard earned holiday if they were not going to be remunerated.

9.3.5 Building sustainable leadership capacity

The SASA (1996) imposes a responsibility on all public school SGBs to do their utmost to improve the quality of education in their schools by raising additional resources to supplement those which the state provides from public funds (Section 36). However, in fulfilling their obligation to raise supplementary resources, SGBs are not required to charge school fees. Whether or not to charge school fees is a matter for the parents of the schools to decide, where schools have not been declared no fee schools in terms of Section 39(7) of the Act. If a majority of parents vote in favour of school fees, each parent is responsible for paying the required fee, unless an exemption has been granted, and unless the school has been declared a no fee school. An SGB may grant fee exemptions on condition that such exemptions are based on transparent and equitable criteria which take into account the need to alleviate the effects of poverty in the households of the school community (Section 170).

The study found that SGB members were never capacitated in the provisions of the SASA although they are expected to govern the school. The ten chairpersons who
were interviewed never received training in the duties and functions they are expected to perform. They all indicated that parents do not pay school fees. None indicated that there were parents who should have been exempted because they are poor and unemployed. Lack of capacity sets the SGBs up for failure and promotes inefficiency in the way the school is managed. It also promotes conflict between the parents, the teachers, the learners and members of the SGB. Thus training is needed in all aspects of the Act for SGB members to be empowered.

It is recommended that the DoE take the responsibility to have all SGBs trained in all aspects of school governance as soon as they are elected. To counter staff shortages, training can be outsourced to NGOs and HEIs, preferably closest to where the schools are. The challenge of the times of the training has to be considered. Training cannot be done successfully during the times when the members of the SGB would be at work. The implication is that times of training should not be imposed by the DoE, but rather negotiated between the training agent and the SGB members. It is recommended that the training be continuous until their term of office expires.

Training is costly. To curb expenses, it is recommended that the term of office of the SGBs be increased from three to five years. Provision could be made in cases where the members cease to be eligible because they are no longer parents of the school. Such members could be retained and be honorary members or life members if members feel that their contribution is invaluable. Sustainability could be effected by making sure that at the next elections, some members from the outgoing SGB are retained.

9.4 MODELS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

9.4.1 Introduction

As has been noted earlier, up until now, parents have not been fully involved in the education of their children; despite the Act of parliament that requires them to be involved. The study found that parents are not aware of this requirement, as they assume that their involvement is through the SGB that represents their interests.
The study also found that they do not involve themselves in schoolwork even at home. When they eventually get to know that they their involvement is invaluable, they will need assistance with regard to how they involve themselves. Hence the recommendation to engage models of parental involvement to develop capacity amongst the parent community. The two models discussed hereunder have been identified as offering practical solutions to challenges of involving parents in education of their children. They will be discussed separately but that does not suggest that they are mutually exclusive.

9.4.2 The empowerment model of parental involvement

9.4.2.1 The rationale for the empowerment model of parental involvement

Shepard and Rose (1995:373) posit that:

The increase in societal influence over children’s lives has become more pronounced during the past 100 years due, in large part, to the institution of formal, compulsory education. The rise in societal responsibility resulted in a corresponding decline in parental role. Parents gradually became more reliant on the school’s judgment and the school’s attempts to understand their children’s abilities, personalities and intellectual potential.

The schooling system thus encouraged parents to abdicate their role and responsibility towards their children. To address this anomaly, the SASA (1996) was promulgated to make provision for parents to again assume their role and be involved in the education of their children, not only as individuals, but also as represented by the SGB.

It is already more than ten years since SASA came into effect. This study was conducted to investigate the extent to which it (the Act) became successful in involving parents in the school. Contrary to expectations of the DoE, findings indicated that black parents do not involve themselves in the education of their
children. Factors that militate against involvement were identified and discussed in the previous chapters.

The empowerment model provides an alternative to the deficit models, which were based on the assumption that families failed to provide the skills, resources and stimulation necessary to prepare their children for school. The shortcoming of this approach includes a failure to consider contextual (community) factors and an implied belief that the values and standards promoted by schools were superior to those of families receiving assistance. Shepard and Rose (1995:374) note that this kind of approach encouraged a sense of helplessness and incompetence in parents. To counter those negative feelings, empowerment interventions view parents as vital sources of information and as having the capacity to make meaningful contributions to their children’s lives and their communities. The goal of empowerment is not simply to change people, but to provide them with the tools which will enable them to better manage their own lives. Furthermore, empowerment models view individuals as belonging to interconnected, concentric environments and who have the ability to (a) make effective use of resources, (b) be effective problem-solvers, and (c) have productive interactions with others (Shepard & Rose, 1995:375).

The best placed people to empower parents are the teachers by virtue of their interaction with the learners on a day-to-day basis. However the study found that teachers have never been capacitated to work with parents. They (teachers) would also need to be work shopped on how to work with parents. It would be required that they be firmly committed to (Shepard & Rose, 1995:375):

- recognizing the parent as the child’s principal educator and as a respected partner within the relationship;
- emphasizing the family’s strengths rather than their deficits;
- viewing children within the context of their current family, school and community environment;
- considering the parents as the best experts about their child as a valued source of information.
Shepard and Rose (1995:375) further note that true empowerment is achieved when parents are actively involved in groups or agencies which can influence and monitor changes at local, district, or statewide levels. It emphasises the development of empowering capabilities within parents. It (the model) proceeds in stages. As one ascends through the hierarchy, greater involvement is achieved as parents acquire the knowledge, skills, confidence, and trust in others necessary for empowered control over their lives. The stages are explained below:

Stage 1, Basic communication. In this stage parents establish an initial link with their child’s school or teacher. At this stage parents have accepted responsibility for monitoring their child’s progress and for reporting this information to the school. Further they may also have committed to accepting teacher-generated information about their child. For many parents, this is an important step in both establishing ties outside the home as well as taking a greater interest in their child’s welfare.

Stage 2, Home improvement. Home improvement includes activities which are designed to enhance parenting skills in general and/or skills related to improving a child’s home learning environment. Programmes aimed at disciplining techniques, healthcare, homework assistance, and reading at home exemplify this category. The assumption here is that parents will attain greater self-efficacy as they engage in activities at this level. This stage requires that parents be more trusting of others and have enough confidence to want to learn from others.

Stage 3 and 4, Volunteering and advocacy. These are the two highest stages of empowerment where social connections outside the home become stronger and more varied. Parental beliefs of self-efficacy are also reaching high levels as they learn to assist and interact with learners and other parents at school (volunteering) and/or work with local and statewide organizations (advocacy).

Worthy of note is the fact that the highest level of involvement as well as empowerment is achieved when parents are able to set the policies and influence the decision-making of their schools. Parents are likely to be active at this stage hence they have acquired the knowledge, confidence and sense of community belonging
necessary for effective involvement. The model does not require that parents be literate or wealthy to be effectively involved.

Schematically the model can be depicted thus:

**Figure 9.3: Empowerment Model for Parental Involvement**

**ADVOCACY:** includes involvement in local, district, or statewide groups which impacts the policy, procedures, and various institutional changes affecting their community. Also includes a number of activities which involve non-school sections such as local businesses.

**VOLUNTEERING:** Involvement activities which extend beyond the immediate home environment and bring the parent into greater contact with the school are included in this level. Parental confidence in self and abilities are necessary here as parents establish more and stronger contacts with other parents and school personnel.

**HOME IMPROVEMENT:** Increased commitment is required at this stage as parents must be more actively engaged in personal development as well as their child's life. Primary activities within this level may be categorized as:
1. Improving parenting skills, and
2. Enhancing home learning

**BASIC COMMUNICATION:** Initial involvement begins with parents and teachers sharing information. This two-way interaction may be further subdivided into the following categories:
1. Teacher informing parents, and
2. Parents informing teachers

(Adapted from Shepard & Rose, 1995:375)
9.4.3 A model of black parental involvement in education

A model of black parental involvement in education was developed by Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004:304-306), specifically for use by black, illiterate and poor parents. The model was tested on a sample, which consisted of 10 schools in which the principal, deputy principal and two other staff members in each school came together to discuss it. Some of these schools are in the township and the rest in the Northern areas of Port Elizabeth. Three of the schools were primary schools and the rest secondary schools. The participants declared the model useful and relevant for the purpose for which it was designed.

The model is designed according to stages and proceeds from one stage to the next. When the first stage has been achieved, one proceeds to the next stage until all the stages have been reached. However the findings indicated that although it is a good idea to involve the parents through all the stages, it may not be practical to involve them beyond stage three. This seems to suggest that if the last two levels are engaged, it should be done with extreme caution. The description of the model follows hereunder:

Stage 1: Convening level

All the respondents thought it is possible as well as necessary to engage parents. The following are some of the comments made:

- The aims of the process must be clearly set out, on a theoretical level (what is regarded as ideal) and on a practical, realistic level (what can be achieved in the situation the parents find themselves in).
- Parents to be given opportunities and the freedom to expressly state what they hope to achieve, in the environment they find themselves in.
- If too ambitious plans are set at this level, this could be a reason for many parents to opt out.
- One factor which has limited black parental involvement has been their work. Therefore it would be very prudent to invite the Education
Department, the industry leaders and other employers to attend convening meetings.

- The framers of this model should agitate for legislation that gives parents the right to visit schools to monitor the progress of their children. Without this right, no parent would want to be involved if it means being penalised for enquiries about their child’s progress.

- Creating opportunities for parents to be partners in education would include:
  - asking parents to conduct prayers at assembly at school;
  - repairs to school property by those who have skills;
  - counselling learners who have psychological problems or some difficulties;
  - arrange information workshops;
  - invite them to seminars where leading specialists are invited;
  - monitor late coming, sit in classrooms when teacher is absent, supervise sport and cultural activities, supervise homework, do tuck-shop duties, maintain school grounds and plant trees;
  - invite them for informal sessions over a cup of tea.

**Stage 2: Clarification level**

All the respondents agreed that this stage would work. The following comments were made:

- Parents’ connections in their workplaces could be used in order to add value to the schools.

- Let parents on their own draw up a vision and mission statement and the school to do likewise and then compare the two. Parents then to assume responsibility and accountability in ensuring that school follows these principles.

- Discuss with them what they think is good and necessary and draw up a priority list together.

- Take into consideration the varying backgrounds of parents.
• Not to expect too much from parents. The limits of their involvement must
be clearly specified.
• Link everyday life of parent (work, home, TV, newspaper, etc.) with continuous education and development of the child.
• Develop a teacher-parent group, a non-formal association for discussion of not only the education of the child but also to maintain social contact between parent and teacher.
• Set out clear guidelines and parameters.
• Teacher and parent to have same expectations of the learners according to the agreed upon vision e.g. dress, conduct, work ethic, workload of learners, curricular content and requirements, homework. A concern was raised of the extent of whether parents have a say on this or schools are following prescriptions from the DoE.

Stage 3: Commitment level

There was general consensus that this stage is the most important though they expressed reservations that parents promise but don’t act on their promises. The following were some of the comments made:

• Engage them in fundraising activities and come up with potential funders
• Share and rotate roles with them.
• Consensual attitude of principal and staff towards parents should be maintained. Parents not to be treated as visitors or outsiders in the school. Not only to be called when their child is in trouble.
• Sharing decision making activities so as to elicit parental support when money is needed.
• To reduce friction, teachers should know learners’ home backgrounds so as to be able to advice and support. However it was noted that parents are not always willing to divulge information about their children and their home conditions.
• No stakeholder should dominate another and everyone should feel free to voice an opinion.
• Many parents work late. Find common ground and commit them to it.
• Set clear boundaries from the outset e.g. classroom discipline, teaching methodology are non-negotiable.

• Consensus decision making may be problematic. Consensus on what?

• Collegial approach on policy decisions may also prove problematic unless care is taken because it may lead to resentment on the part of teachers.

• Care should also be taken that parent-teacher relationships do not disadvantage the learner to the extent that the teacher assumes she or he can do anything or nothing (!) due to the good relationship.

• Commitment can be enforced in subtle and rewarding ways by:
  - Developing a simplified checklist for parents which is to be returned to the teacher and filed in the learner’s portfolio. The checklist only to be accredited after parent has been to school to discuss the role they have played in the education and development of the learners.
  - Parents could earn points for each contact between parent and teacher. This includes schools visits, attendance at parent meetings.
  - Points can be assessed at the end of the year and can be converted to e.g. deduction of school fees.

**Stage 4: Attainment level**

This level was declared good but not very practical. A number of concerns were raised some of which include the following:

• At this level the only acceptable developments would be joint responsibility for resource utilization and the vision and mission statements.

• Attaining coordination and control over activities would only be achievable if there was agreement on specific activities which would not hinder / restrict / disturb the orderly management of the school i.e. teaching and learning. The educational process would be disrupted and resentment could develop among both parents and teachers.

• Parents would be upset if they are given the impression that they have control and find that they have very little control (power) and teachers would resent being controlled by parents who do not have the capacity to prescribe to them.
• Similarly joint deliberation on educational issues must not disturb the educational process or cause friction between parents and teachers.

• If the guidelines were clearly set out, there would be no encroachment on the teaching / learning process.

• Perceptions of both teachers and parents are powerful. It is conceivable that many teachers would feel that there are sinister undertones in the coordination especially the joint responsibility of educational issues. Immediately one would hear teachers’ unions complaining and referring to the level of education of the parents, the professional nature of teaching and whole litany of reasons why parents should not even think of jointly deliberating any issues of educational nature. Of all the points mentioned, this (and the transparent approach to policy implementation) seems to be the most controversial.

• One point of concern is whether it is envisaged that the attainment level will be crystallized in the SGB.

Stage 5: Evaluation

The words “not practical, difficult, almost impossible” were used by the respondents to respond to this level. The participants expressed the following concerns:

• Parents are not able to understand issues pertaining to education. They lack the skills and the expertise. Their involvement at this level can become problematic.

• School development plans invite parents to be part of the programmes but only a handful participates. Attempts at recruiting them failed because of a lack of confidence in dealing with educational matters.

• The teacher is in charge of the formal learning process and takes responsibility for it. If parents have a say / an input in the assessment process, it can create confusion among the learners, can cause strain between teacher and parent and can ultimately have negative effect on the entire development of the learner and the broader educational process. However some outcomes like general behaviour can be jointly evaluated.
• Cost-effectiveness, communication channels and modification of current plans and goals can be easily evaluated, on a continuous basis, by both parents and teachers meeting on a regular basis.

• If this evaluation refers to the evaluation of the first four steps (convening, clarification, commitment and attainment) then it must be done against the background of precautionary measures stated above. Without these precautions, the role of the parent will be negated by resistance from the teachers.

Involving parents in school implies change. It implies that teachers have to learn to accommodate parents and the SGB and to work hand in hand with them. It implies a change of mindset in both these parties. Both parties have to accept that the imperative to change comes from outside of them as it was imposed by legislation in the form of SASA (1996). It also implies that the parties involved must recognize a need for change. Ornstein and Hunkins (2004:305) note that parties involved are more likely to recognize that need “if they understand change and how it works”. Both parties have also to understand the environmental context within which they are operating. Ornstein and Hunkins (ibid) further advise that an external audit be made in the initial phase to gather and assess information relating to the demographics of the community and its socio-cultural, politico-legal, and economic aspects so that the particular phases of implementation can be made sensitive to community attitudes and expectations.

Lewin (in Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004:306) conceptualized the change process as consisting of three stages. He calls the first stage unfreezing, where changes to the current situation in which people find themselves have to occur. Unfreezing means a decrease in the restraining forces in order to stimulate the driving forces. In the model of black parental involvement in education, unfreezing would occur at the convening level, whereas in the empowerment model of parental involvement, it would occur at the basic communication stage.

The second stage after unfreezing is getting the participants to move from the unfrozen point to the destination or goal point where the participants engage in the actions necessary for attaining the change now desired. In the model of black
parental involvement in education, this would occur progressively from the second to the fourth level. In the empowerment model of parental involvement, this would also occur progressively from home improvement to advocacy.

On successfully attaining the second stage, refreezing, the third stage of change occurs. This in essence implies that the desired change has been successfully implemented and the changed state becomes the status quo.

A word of caution from Ornstein and Hunkins (2004:305) is that implementation of successful change efforts must be organic rather than bureaucratic. Bureaucratic means that there is strict compliance, monitoring procedures and rules. This is not conducive to change. The organic or adaptive approach, however, permits some deviation from the original plan and recognizes grassroots problems and conditions of both home and school. There may be times when both teachers and parents may not be able to deliver as planned or scheduled due to unforeseen circumstances. These deviations will need to be accommodated. The teachers would need to be at the driving seat of all these changes.

9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The universe of the study was all the schools in the Port Elizabeth area. Port Elizabeth consists of former Model A, B and C schools which were Whites only schools and which are located in the suburbs in and around the city. There are also former Coloured only and Indian only schools in the Northern suburbs of the city. There are also former DET schools, which were for black only learners. These are in the townships. Learners in these schools are described as the urban poor. All the ten schools in the sample fall within the category of the former DET schools who were and are still poor, disadvantaged individuals. The study therefore was conducted among only one homogeneous population, group - the former DET schools. For further study, it is recommended that a comparative study be conducted among the other population groups mentioned above to investigate the extent of involvement of parents in these groups and the ways in which they are involved as and if the history of the country has an impact on the types of involvement.
Former DET schools in the townships and in the rural areas are differently disadvantaged. The major difference lies in the staff provisioning as well as allocation of resources. Generally schools in the rural areas do not attract qualified personnel and have to make do with under-qualified and unqualified staff, this because of their being far removed from the cities and what they offer. A comparative study could be conducted among these groups to see if there are differences in patterns of involvement.

Models of parental involvement have been identified and described. A case study could be conducted where a researcher would work with just one school and manage the process of involving parents in the school and then report on the results of the process.

9.6 CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate the extent of involvement of black parents in the education of their children as envisaged by the SASA. The findings showed that parents are not as involved as envisaged. In the first chapter, the problem was stated and the aims and objectives of the study spelt out. A literature review was conducted to establish what the concept parental involvement entails; what factors promote and hinder parental involvement, and what perceptions the stakeholders have on the concept.

The qualitative method was chosen and one-on-one interviews were conducted with the principals and chairpersons of the SGBs of the ten schools forming the sample. Focus group interviews were also conducted with the teachers and learners of the same schools. The findings were analysed using qualitative data analysis and results were reported. Recommendations were then made for application at both macro- and micro levels. Recommendations for further study were made although they cannot be said to be exhaustive or conclusive.

The challenges that this non-involvement brings with it have been spelt out. This chapter gives recommendations that, if applied, would go a long way towards
involving parents in education. Recommendations have been given at micro- and macro levels.

At micro-level it has been recommended that the distance that exists between home and school should be closed or at least narrowed by forging home-school relationships between teachers and the parents. That would automatically open up effective channels of communication between these stakeholders. Recommendations have been made on how parents could involve themselves in schoolwork at home. Strategies of how to work with the community have been suggested as well as suggestions of home visits by the teachers. Finally it has been recommended that a values-based education would solve a number of problems relating to how to behave at home, at school and in the community.

At macro-level, recommendations have been made on how poverty could be alleviated, how to enforce compulsory school attendance, and how parents could be partners with the school by being entrepreneurs. Strategies on how to build sustainable leadership capacity have been discussed as well as strategies on how to counteract illiteracy. Two models of parental involvement have been discussed and it has been recommended that the use of the models is the best approach to adopt in involving the parents in the activities of the school as a whole.

Finally, recommendations for further research have been identified.

In the light of this study, it is thus apparent that parental involvement in especially previously disadvantaged schools is cause for concern. If schools hope to ensure greater parental involvement, they will have to change their narrow tunnel-vision approach and experiment with the implementation of more creative measures to ensure active and effective parental involvement as suggested by this study.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX 1

LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
P.O.Box 77000
Port Elizabeth
6000
19 June 2007

The District Manager
Port Elizabeth District
Department of Education
PORT ELIZABETH
6000

Dear Sir

Request permission to do research

I am a student and a lecturer at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. I am studying towards a PhD in Education (Educational Management). I am engaged in research in which I am investigating the extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children as envisaged by the South African Schools Act 18 of 1996. My topic of research is BLACK PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION.

I need to conduct interviews with four groups of stakeholders in 15 selected schools in your district – one-on-one interviews with the principals, focus group interviews with the teachers, focus group interviews with the learners and one-on-one interviews with the chairpersons of School Governing Bodies. For reasons of confidentiality I cannot disclose the names of the selected schools. I have applied for clearance with the ethics committee as well.

I will greatly appreciate your kind assistance in the matter.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

Mrs SM Mbokodi
APPENDIX 2
LETTER GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ethel Valentine Building* Sutton Road * Sidwell * Private Bag X3931 * North End * Port Elizabeth * 6056 *
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA * Tel: 0414034420 * Fax: 0414510193 *
Website: ecprov.gov.za * Email: samuel.snayer@eduto.ecprov.gov.za

Mrs S.M. Mbokodi
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
P.O. Box 77000
Port Elizabeth
6000

Dear Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I refer to your letter dated 19 June 2007.

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

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

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

I wish you good luck in your research.

Yours faithfully

S. SNAYER
DISTRICT DIRECTOR: PORT ELIZABETH

04 July 2007
22 August 2007

Ms S M Mbokodi
Education Faculty
NMMU

Dear Ms Mbokodi

RE: APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

The Faculty of Education Research, Technology and Innovation Committee has approved your application for ethics clearance for your research TO INVESTIGATE THE EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT OF BLACK PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AS ENVISAGED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT OF 1996 on the 21st August 2007.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

PROF M.M. BOTHA
Chairperson: ERTIC
APPENDIX 4
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Title: Black Parental Involvement in Education

Name of Researcher: Sindiswa Madgie Mbokodi

Address: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Summerstrand South Campus
P.O. Box 77000
PORT ELIZABETH
6205

Contact Number: 041 504 1198; 083 225 5716

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to be involved in this research study. I greatly appreciate your co-operation. Kindly take note of the following:

• Your involvement in this study is voluntary. You are not obliged to divulge information you would prefer to remain private. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.
• I undertake to treat the information you provide as confidential. Your name will not be disclosed in any document, including the interview transcripts and the research report, by your name, surname or by any other information. Your school will be given a pseudo name. No one, other than myself will be informed of your participation in the study.
• If the research may include risks to you, these will be minimal and no different from those encountered by people on a daily basis. Every effort will be made to minimize possible risks.
• The research findings will be made available to you should you request them.
• Should you have any queries about the research, now or in future, you are welcome to contact me at the above address.

Your signature indicates that you have voluntarily decided to participate in the research, having read and understood the information provided above.

Your signature____________________

Date____________________________
Molo Mthathi-nxaxheba,

Ndiyabulela kakhulu ngokuba uvumile ukuthatha inxaxheba kolu phando. Ndibulela nangentsebenziswa yakho. Nceda ke uqaphele oku kulandelayo:

• Ukuthatha kwakho inxaxheba kolu phando sisigqibo sakho. Awunyanzelekanga ukuba udize amahlebo ongenakuthanda ukuba athiwe pa-ha-ha elubala. Uvumelekile ukuba ungarhoxa nanini na uthanda.
• Ukuba ngandlela ithile kungathi kube kho ngozi inokuvela ngenxa yolu phando, onke amatile-tile aya kwenziwa ukuqinisekisa ukhuseleko lwakho.
• Xa unganqwenela ukubona iziphumo zophando, uya kuziboniswa.
• Ukuba unamibuzo unayo ngolu phando, ngoku okanye kwixesha elizayo, ungaqhagamshelana nam kwezi nombolo zingasentla.
Ukusayina kwakho ngasezantsi apha kwalatha ukuba uvumile ukuthatha inxaxheba kolu phando unganyzelwanga mntu. Kwalatha ukuba uyifundile wayiqonda le mbalelwano ingasentla apha.

Intsayino-gama____________________________________

Umhla__________________________________________
APPENDIX 5
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

Question 1: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children.
You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved in the school?

Question 2: Attendance of parent meetings.
In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with what goes on in the school, they need to attend parent meetings.
Do parents attend meetings?

Question 3: Parents meeting their financial obligations
For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.
Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Question 4: Communication
For parents and the school to work together, lines of communication have to be open so that the school knows what the parents want and vice versa.
How do you communicate with the parents?

Question 5: Challenges that block the progress of the school
Challenges retard the progress of any organization including the school.
What challenges do you experience as a school as a result of parents not fully involving themselves in school activities?
APPENDIX 6
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Question 1: The extent of involvement of parents in the education of their children.
You are aware that the SASA envisages a situation where parents are involved in the activities of the school – not only as individuals but also as represented by the SGB. 
Specifically in what areas are parents and the SGB involved?

Question 2: Attendance of parent meetings.
In order for parents and the SGB to keep in touch with the school and to monitor the progress of their children, they need to attend parent and grade meetings invited by the school.
Do parents attend these meetings?

Question 3: Parents meeting their financial obligations
For effective teaching and learning to take place, schools need sufficient funds to finance their daily activities. The greater contribution comes from parents in the form of school fees.
Do parents meet their financial obligations?

Question 4: Parent involvement at home
Teachers work with learners on a day-to-day basis. They give learners homework and other projects (including research projects) in which learners need the assistance of their parents.
Do you see any evidence of parent involvement at home?

Question 5: Communication with parents
Teachers are custodians of the learners during the time that they spend in school. Communication lines need to be open between the parent and teacher so that they can keep each other informed of their joint responsibility.
How do you communicate with the parents and how do they communicate with you?
Question 6: Training in parental involvement
For teachers to effectively work with parents, they need to be skilled in working with the parents. The training should have been received in pre-service at the college of education or university where the teacher trained, or as part of in-service training offered by the DoE as staff development training.
Have you received any training in working with parents?

Question 7: Challenges experienced by the teacher
The core business of every school is effective teaching and learning. These cannot take place where problems are overwhelming and no solutions are found to the problems. Much time and energy are expended in solving the problems than in teaching and learning.
What challenges do you experience as a result of parents not involving themselves in the education of their children as envisaged?
APPENDIX 7
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS

Question 1: Parental involvement at school
The DoE wishes to see all parents involved in the activities of the school.
*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school?*

Question 2: Parental involvement at home
*In what ways do your parents involve themselves in your school activities at home?*

Question 3: Attendance of parent meetings
*When your parents are invited to parents’ meetings, do they always attend?*

Question 4: Parents meeting their financial obligations
*Do your parents pay school fees?*

Question 5: Communication between home and school
*How does your school communicate with your parents?*
APPENDIX 8
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (SGB)

Question 1: The extent of involvement of the SGB in school
The DoE as informed by the SASA wishes to have parents involved in the governance of schools. 
Specifically in what areas is the SGB involved in the running of the school?

Question 2: Attendance of SGB and parent meetings
For parents and the SGB to know what goes on in school and to fulfil their responsibilities, they need to attend parent meetings.
Do parents and the SGB attend parent meetings?

Question 3: Parents meeting their financial obligations
Parents need to supplement the resources provided by the State through contributing towards the school fund and engaging in fund raising activities.
Does the SGB organize fund raising activities?
Do parents pay their children’s school fees?

Question 4: Relations between the principal, the teachers and the SGB
For the optimum functioning of the school, there should exist cordial relations of trust and respect between the SGB and the principal and staff. These parties should work together towards a common goal namely effective teaching and learning.
How would you describe your relationship with the principal and the teachers?

Question 5: Training in performing roles and functions
In order for the SGB to be effective in performing their functions, they need to be conversant with the provisions of the SASA. They need to possess the Manual for SGBs. Training workshops should be held to capacitate them so that they perform their envisaged functions well.
Have you received any training in performing your functions?
Question 6: Challenges that may hamper the smooth functioning of the school
For the school to function effectively, all challenges need to be identified and addressed.

*What challenges does the SGB experience that hampers the smooth running of the school?*

*What does the SGB do to address the identified challenges?*