THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN
THE PROMOTION OF PARENTAL
INVolVEMENT IN TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS IN
GEORGE

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ABSTRACT

The law relating to, and having an impact on, parental involvement has increased in quantity and complexity in the last couple of decades. It is therefore overwhelming to find out that parents are still taking a back seat as far as parental involvement is concerned in schools. Parents and educators have to work together towards one common goal, to assist learners in their journey through adulthood.

The focus of the research was the role of the school management team in promoting parental involvement in the education of their children; how the school’s climate can be changed and be made accessible to parents. Educators must be taught how to invite and involve parents in the school’s activities. Parents have to be empowered as effective participants in school activities. Parents and educators should work together in solving their own problems and to overcome numerous challenges in their schools. Parents and educators have to develop trust and be able to remove the obstacles, various elements and factors that prevent them from working together to develop the schools as powerful working organisations. Parents and educators have to collaborate in building their educational objectives.

The research attempted to determine all the possible causes of the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children. The researcher also believed that if the problem of non-involvement of parents can be solved, the learner’s academic achievements can improve drastically. The findings and recommendations indicate that parental involvement remains a crucial point in all the efforts to enhance school effectiveness. The researcher in the study also investigated the assumption that parents from the townships do not take part in their children’s activities because they don’t care.
DEDICATION

To my husband Linda, I did not make a mistake by choosing you; I thank God. My eldest daughter Asanda, for her sacrifice in doing the house chores. When she had to study for her final exams (Grade 12), I also had to finish the project at the same time. She made me so proud for obtaining excellent results despite the circumstances. My 2nd daughter Andiswa, with her mischievous smile and constantly reminding me when I sat in front of the Television and watching a soapy or a movie that ‘Dr McFarlane is coming and he is not going to ask which movie played this week. My boy Axolile, he was a year old when I commenced with my (FDE, school management) in 1997. He was in Grade 5 when I did this research. What a sacrifice ‘Guys’, thank you.
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CHAPTER ONE

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN THE PROMOTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TWO TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS IN GEORGE

1.1 BACKGROUND

South Africa has undergone many changes in the past few years after 1994, the post-apartheid era. The changes in the country have also affected education in many ways. Some of the changes that happened were good for South Africans as a whole, especially for the previously disadvantaged communities. The Education Department became unified, unlike in the past where the Education System and Education Departments were divided racially. After these changes all children were allowed to attend any school of choice without being discriminated against because of colour and race. Parents, who could afford to pay the school fees and transport, took their children to Model C schools (previously white schools) and left the township schools. Poor and illiterate parents did not have a choice. They had to keep their children in the township schools that were not properly equipped with learning materials and learning resources. The parents themselves were not educated and they relied only on the help of educators to assist them in educating their children and had no knowledge of being involved in school activities.

The damage caused by the apartheid regime in the Education Department and the consequences thereof will take some time before it can be rectified. One of the major consequences was having many people who were illiterate. Strauss and Burger (2000:41), confirm that few black people had a chance of attending school and being able to read and write, especially in the previously disadvantaged communities. The consequences of illiteracy are still affecting our education system long after the apartheid era.

Schools and educators in the townships are still struggling to eradicate ignorance and illiteracy. Parents in the disadvantaged communities are not empowered to assist educators in their endeavours to eradicate illiteracy and ignorance. No one can deny the fact that ‘Knowledge is Power’. If you have education and knowledge you can master many spheres in life. The people in townships are struggling to educate their children because they themselves don’t have a proper education. In the past it was the custom for parents to leave education to educators and expect that they would do everything in their power to educate their children.

Things have changed. The new Education Department expects parents to play a major role in the education of their children. The new education policy and the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 demand parental involvement in schools activities. Parents are now expected to be involved in the education of their children and through School Governing Bodies (SGB), help in the governance of the schools. Another big problem that the education departments are still faced with is how to make these parents in the governing bodies effective in their duties. Parents need to be empowered to be able to work in schools because schools are learning organizations that deal with education and parents are not educated to be able to meet the school requirements. Again the mostly affected communities are the previously disadvantaged communities, while the
advantaged communities are advancing and improving their schools even more than before.

1.2 CONTEXT

1.2.1 Personal context

As an educator for more than 18 (eighteen) years in one of the schools used in the study, my major concern have always been the Grade 12 (standard 10) results. According to the media the results in township schools has been improving very slowly each year, including the school that I teach at. There are so many reasons put forward every year for the bad performance of students. I will mention the following:

- shortage of text books
- shortage of learning material
- overcrowding/big classes
- shortage of educators
- educators’ absenteeism from school
- ill-discipline from learners or educators
- learners’ absenteeism from school
- inadequate management skills from principals and SMT
- educators’ strikes (not coming to work) - (recently 2007)
- learners’ involvement in strike actions (Kutsong) - (recently 2007).

Nothing has ever been mentioned about the parents and their non-involvement in the education of their children. Since I started teaching in 1988, I have noticed the non-involvement of parents in the township schools. Most educators working in the township schools have experienced the same problem of struggling to get parents to be involved in school activities. Talking to other educators about the problem it is overwhelmingly obvious that parental involvement in schools is decreasing at an alarming rate.

At the same time the number of learners dropping out of school is increasing. Educators, including myself, are struggling to come to terms with this frightening problem because schools are losing good, hard working learners and parents are not available to talk to. They do not come to school even if letters or circulars are sent to them.

As an educator and a parent (with three children), I saw the opportunity of investigating this problem. All my children are at the Model C schools. I had the advantage of comparing the parental involvement in those schools to the township ones, as I was working with educators of my own children’s schools. When my first child was in Grade one I always observed parents working with teachers preparing for schools’ functions. As I was one of the parents in those functions, I always envied these educators in Model C schools, wishing that the same could happen in our township schools. At the beginning I thought that parents in the township schools would improve, but to my surprise their involvement was deteriorating. Another issue that bothered me was that there are parents from the township who have one child in a Model C school and two in township schools. In Model C schools a small number of black parents from the township do participate, which is no the case in the township schools. I then decided to do this study to find out where the problem was, and also to help our township parents and educators.
1.2.2 Professional Context

As a Safe Schools’ coordinator and an educator in one of the schools mentioned in the study, I could not help wondering what can be done to improve parental involvement in township schools. The new changes in education need parents and educators to work together in schools. Educators are faced with a huge task of educating parents about the new changes, but parents do not attend school meetings and functions which makes the educators’ work even more complicated. Parents come to school only when their children have transgressed, and in most cases they expect educators to punish the child with corporal punishment. If an educator explains to the parents that it is against the law to do such things they don’t understand. The educators have to explain rules and regulations every day instead of only once to all parents. Parents and educators don’t understand one another because parents do not know the new rules and do not come to school to find out. The only time they find out is when there is a problem.

Educators need parents to help them to develop and assist the children towards the correct path in life. As the Safe Schools’ coordinator I need to work closely with parents and make them aware of new changes pertaining to the safety of learners and educators at school. In the past when a child became sick at school it was easy to ask another child to accompany that child home or an educator with his vehicle could take a learner home or to the clinic (local health centre). With the new rules no learner may be taken home by anybody besides his/her parents. All these new rules and regulations need to be explained to parents who are expected to discuss them.

1.2.3 Demographics/School context

When doing qualitative research, the researcher has to understand a phenomenon as it occurs in its broader context. A clear statement about the area and participants studied should be defined (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:412). In the case of this study the schools are servicing previously disadvantaged communities in a township.

The school buildings are built according to the acceptable standard of school building in South Africa, but they are very poorly equipped with resources and learning materials. Each school has one Khanya Computer Lab, which is used for more than 1600 learners. Classes are overcrowded, with a maximum of 45 learners per class. The School Governing Bodies are elected by the few parents who attend meetings. The functions of the governing bodies are almost non-existent. Getting hold of members of the SGBs for the purpose of this research was difficult.

Both schools being investigated are senior secondary schools with classes from grade eight to grade twelve. The learners’ ages range from between 14 and 15 (fourteen and fifteen) years for grade 8 and grade 9. In Grade 10-12 the learners’ ages are between 16 and 22 (sixteen and twenty-two). During the early 90’s we still had learners who were very old. In grade 12 we had learners who were over the age of 25 (twenty-five). During the late 90’s at least the ages were normal for the grades that they were doing. There are learners still (mostly female) who are above eighteen years old in both schools, seemingly because they had to drop out of school because of pregnancy and come back after the birth of a child to complete their studies.
Learners from both schools are a mixture from rural and urban areas. A large number come from the informal settlement areas around Eastern Cape and Western Cape. George is the center for all the Southern Cape towns and it also provided all the other towns with jobs. Even people from the Eastern Cape come to George to look for work and bring their children along. The two schools were chosen for their proximity to me as a researcher and because I am an educator in one of them and I am quite aware of the parental involvement in my school.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

The motivation for this study was my involvement as educator with a particular school for a period of more than 18 years. I have for some time been concerned about the lack of involvement of parents in the activities of the school and therefore decided to do something about it.

My concern was about the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. I started working in this particular school during the late 80’s, and I am now teaching the children of these learners. The situation of the parents’ involvement in the education of their children has not changed; instead it has deteriorated. Many changes have been implemented in the education system, from the apartheid era to the new democratic South Africa. Changes like opening schools for all children regardless of their race or gender, the implementation of OBE and NRCS and the election of SGBs. Little has changed as far as improving parental involvement especially in black township schools. As an educator I know that education does not stop when the bell rings. It continues for the whole day, also at home with parents. As I have stated before that I am an educator and a parent that is very much involved in the schools were my children are learning. My husband has been serving in one of the Schools Governing Body for more than nine years. We have been both involved in our children’s schools activities and we have witnessed the difference that it makes in our children’s academic performances. This is also another reason why I decided to do this study because I want to improve the role that can be played by the SMT’s in involving parents in the school’s activities. I also want to be involved in assisting and motivating parents to be involved in their children’s education.

After reading and understanding authors such as, Bastiani (1995:7) who states that families are by far the biggest influence on the attitudes, behaviour and academic performance of young people, I realized that eventually much of what children will eventually know and be able to do is shaped in the home. I felt even keener to do this study. Comparing the level of education of parents of the late 80’s, Colclough (2002:145) says that parents of the 21st century are at least better equipped in educational matters than the parents of the late 80’s. According to Davies (2002:1), assumptions were made by educators that parents are not involved because they did not care. As Creswell (2003:6) suggests, one needs to find out the truth about common assumptions.

I became very curious and had an urge that to investigate these assumptions. I also found myself in an advantageous position to try and find the solution for the problem of the non-involvement of parents because of my position as an educator and a parent. McDonald (1998:91) says that educators who are also parents have empathy for other
parents because of their dual role. Being an educator and a parent in this case I found myself in an advantageous position to investigate this problem.

I am also aware of parents who are working and how much time they spend with their children at home. Unfortunately the quality of social life in families and neighbourhoods has declined markedly, and most parents have to work to earn a living (Coleman 1987:37; Comer, 1988:27). Davies, (1991:378) mention the fact that the need for money for families in the communities is also becoming a bigger issue. Coleman (1987:37) adds that the comforting environment of homes is affected; parents are more absent from homes because of work. Parents don’t have time to discuss academic and social issues with their children, because they work till late in the afternoon. Some parents are self employed, which puts an even bigger burden on them to concentrate on them.

People often say that the lack of parental involvement in disadvantaged communities is caused by the fact that the parents do not care about the education of their children. I wanted to test that assumption, and that is one of the reasons why I chose the topic.

This study is done from an educational management perspective, to provide information for educational managers. Any educational manager may use the information to improve parental involvement in schools, especially in the disadvantaged communities.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

From the above it should be obvious that the challenge was to determine

- how the principal, SMT and educators thought parental involvement in the education of their children could be promoted

- what can be done to improve the situation of parental involvement in schools so as to achieve better working relations between parents and educators and achieve better academic results for the children?

1.5 PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to attempt to identify the causes and the problems of the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children and how to promote and rectify these causes/problems in the two township schools in George.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

For the purpose of this study the key research question was:

What role can the school management team play in the promotion of parental involvement in township schools?

The following sub-questions were investigated:

- What are the causes of the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children?
What are the consequences of the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children?
How can these problems/challenges be solved, and what are the solutions to the problems?

1.7 DEMARCATION OF STUDY

The two schools used in the study are in the Southern Cape district of the Western Cape Education Department. The reasons for conducting this study in these particular schools were because of my own involvement with one of the schools mentioned in the study. The two schools have also been identified by the Education Department as non-school fee schools because of the socio-economic status of the parents in the community.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is important for a researcher to define the terms used in the study. People have different knowledge and understandings of the meaning of the words, so as a researcher you have to define the context in which these terms have been used to make it easy for the readers to understand the researcher’s line of argument and his/her findings. Mc Kernan (1997:62) confirms that the concept definition is done for the purpose of uncovering meaning and bearing in mind the knowledge of defining attributes.

SMT - stands for school management team.
SGB – School Governing Bodies.
Teenager - A teenager according to The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1991:1253) is a child between the ages of 13 to 19 years.
Divorce - According to Springate and Stegelin (1999:163) divorce is the legal process of two individuals dissolving a marriage relationship or the dissolution of a marriage bond by legal process by accepted custom.
Blended family - Springate and Stegelin (1999:163) define this kind of a family as a family in which one or both spouses in a re-marriage has a child or children by a former marriage. Other terms used to describe blended families are reconstituted families, stepfamilies, reorganized-, combined-, re-married- families.
Illiteracy - not being educated, unable to read and write.
Parental involvement- Being involved in the school’s activities and school’s functions; practically helping educators at school.

1.9 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

The study is structured as follows:
1.9.1 CHAPTER ONE

This chapter provides a brief overview of the rationale purpose, research design and the relevance of the study.

1.9.2 CHAPTER TWO

This chapter provides the relevant literature review for the study. In this chapter the relevant literature and the nature of the other researchers for the same topic have been explored. Theories and processes, which are related to parental involvement in the education of their children, are also reviewed. Assumptions about the non-involvement of parents have been explained and argued.

1.9.3 CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter the research design is explained. The description of the research methodology is provided and research methods that are followed are also provided. It also gives the overview of how the data were collected and analysed. The data is analysed and discussion of data collected is done in this chapter. It also provides an interpretation of what the data revealed.

1.9.4 CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter is the most important one because it summarises the findings of the study and also suggests recommendations to promote and improve parental involvement in the education of their children.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Struwig & Stead (2001:38) state that “all researchers need to do a literature study that involves tracing, identifying and analyzing documents containing information related to the research problem”. They also emphasize that the literature used for the study should be relevant to the study.

2.1.1 Why do researchers need to conduct a literature study?

Struwig & Stead (2001:39) stipulate that researchers need to conduct a literature study for the following reasons:

- A literature study reveals how the other researchers have dealt with similar research problems in similar situations and provides the new researcher with a way forward
- It is necessary to show how the problem under investigation relates to previous research studies
- It also stimulates new ideas and approaches for the new researcher
- It provide a framework for the evaluation and assessment of future work
- It also reveals unfamiliar sources of information
- A perspective on your own study can be provided
- It provides basic knowledge as to how people derive theories, principles, concepts and approaches for their research.

2.1.2 Sources for relevant literature

Anderson & Poole (2001:21) say that looking for the relevant literature is one of the tasks of a researcher that needs to be done carefully. Struwig & Stead (2001:39) confirm the fact that the researcher has to be careful about where he/she places the literature in a qualitative study. The literature in the qualitative study may be placed in the discussion section whereas in the quantitative study, the literature introduces the study.

Below sources of relevant literature study are mentioned:

- library reference services;
- reports from research institutes;
- periodicals (journals);
- dissertations and theses;
- conference papers;
- conference proceedings;
- textbooks;
- newspapers
- the Internet.

Struwig & Stead (2001:40) also emphasize the fact that a brief, intensive study of the literature is worth more than an extensive, superficial one. They also say that while the
importance of a research problem does not depend on the amount of literature available on the subject, that does not mean that the researcher must not do thorough reading about his/her research problem.

2.2 Literature study

2.2.1 Introduction

Prior to 1994 the entire South African education system was organized along racial lines and the practice of parental involvement in decision making at school level differed accordingly (Van Wyk, 2002: 34). According to Van Wyk, at most schools serving the white community, statutory parent bodies were established which had a wide range of decision making powers. In schools attended by black pupils, only a few members of parent bodies could be elected by parents; the majorities were government appointees. The lack of accountability of these bodies to the communities they were supposed to serve, allowed them to “… trample over grassroots opinion” Hyslop, cited by Van Wyk (2002:33).

Following the 1994 democratic elections, a non-racial education system based on the principle of equity, was instituted. To accommodate this, a National Department of Education and nine Provincial Departments of Education were established. South African legislation since 1994 has introduced important education reforms, which aim to improve the partnership between school and family. The South African Schools Act (SASA) No 84 (1996:4) defines the concept of a parent; describes basic parental duties, sets requirements for schools related to parents’ rights to information and provides for parent representation in mandatory School Governing Bodies (SGBs). According to SASA the SGBs are composed of the following members:

- Elected parents, (who have to be in the majority).
- Two educators (in the school but not having own children at the same school).
- Two learners (in the eighth grade or higher).
- One co-opted member who does not have voting rights.

Moreover, recognition that increased parental involvement should start in Early Childhood Development (ECD), received attention in recent legislation and policy documents, such as the Education (White Paper 5): (DoE 2001), the National ECD Pilot Project Draft (DoE 1998b), Assessment Policy in General Education and Training (GET) and ABET (DoE 1998(a), and the Language in Education Policy (DoE 1997:7). All these policy documents explicitly or implicitly acknowledge that parents play an important role in the education of children and that partnership should be forged between the home and the school.

Effective and meaningful education requires the participation and co-operation of both educators and parents (Squelch (1994:3). Heystek (1998:18) indicates that a majority of schools do not provide enough opportunities for the parents to participate in the school activities. According to Heystek and Louw (1999:22) the motivation of the parents to participate at schools depends on the educators and the principals. Some principals think that empowering parents means that parents will take over the running of schools, but that is not true. Empowering parents give them self-worth and self-esteem because they
develop an ability, a capability and skills to do things that they were never involved with before, (Batey 1996:21). Empowered parents can help and share in the policy-making process at the local school level, as well as at the district level.

This study focuses on the importance of parental involvement and specifically draws on the literature to provide answers to the three main research questions namely: the causes of the non-involvement of parents, the consequences of the non-involvement of parents and the solutions to the problem of the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children.

2.3 WHAT IS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT?

Different authors, researchers and other people have different interpretations of the term, ‘parental involvement’. Often the thinking about parental involvement is limited to parents serving on school governing bodies (SGB’s) or on parent-teacher associations (PTA’s) whose functions are mainly of a fund-raising nature, or helping to organize school activities and events (Botha, Mentz, Roos, van der Westhuizen and van Kerken, (2003: 209). Squelch, (1994:52) continues to define parental involvement as much more than merely serving on a school committee. She states that parental involvement implies the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school- and home-based activities. Parental involvement is manifested in a variety of activities, from supporting and upholding the ethos of the school to supervising children’s homework.

In this study the term “parent” is used in its widest possible meaning to include biological parents, legal guardians or any other adults who are responsible for looking after or taking care of children. Anybody who is taking care of children should take an interest in their education. That is the legal duty of any parent or caregiver (SASA, (1996:13). The extent to which parents become involved will depend on various factors. It is also clear that not all parents have the same interest, time or skills, but no matter what the circumstances may be, every parent can, in some way, help his or her child succeed at school. No parent can be allowed to be totally uninvolved (Conradie, Beckmann and Spiro cited by Botha, et al. (2003:86).

2.4 WHY SHOULD PARENTS BECOME MORE INVOLVED?

Most researchers such as Lemmer, (2002:197); Henderson & Berla, (1994:10), support the idea of educator-parent co-operation, and they believe that it enhances learner improvement at school, learners’ self-esteem, better school attendance and regular completion of homework. In addition they emphasize the following benefits of parental co-operation:

➢ More positive attitudes and behaviour in school by learners
➢ Better school leaving results
➢ Higher enrolments in post-secondary education.

All parents have a meaningful contribution to make school activities that fall outside the expertise of the educator, where parents are experts as a result of their particular professional background or field of interest (Botha et al., 2003:194). Weeto (1997:5) and Squelch (1994:2) list the following reasons why parental involvement is crucial:
It contributes to the vital role of parents in giving attention to and love for their children.

Children are born into a certain religious and cultural milieu which is characterized by particular practices, values and norms. Parents must see to it that the school does not interfere with these cultural and religious values.

All parents are primary and natural educators and they want their children to succeed.

Educators’ and parents’ skills complement each other.

Parents can influence their children’s attitudes, behaviour and discipline towards schooling and education.

Parents have certain legal rights regarding their children’s education.

Legally the parent is the primary educator of the child, and has a duty to perform, i.e. to give continuing attention to the child and be involved with the educational training of the child (Weeto, 1997: 17) and (Botha, et al. 2003:193). The parent is the child’s first and most important educator (Springate & Stegelin, 1999:75).

Other sources and readings from different authors and researchers such as Davies (2002: 7); Fraser, (2001:21-42); Epstein, (2001:17), and McInerney, (2002:15) confirm the fact that parental involvement relates to more learner achievement and more academic improvement at schools.

The research by Bridgemohan, Van Wyk, Van Staden (2005: 11), highlights the stereotype that links the low socio-economic parents to the non-involvement of parents. They also stipulate the fact that these parents are labeled as people who do not care about their children’s education. Parry (2000:68) says this is a belief and a generalization about people that leads to the insufficient attention given to individual differences. According to Epstein (1995: 703) it’s not true that parents do not care about their children’s education because he states that irrespective of parents’ socio-economic status, all parents want their children to succeed.

2.5 CAUSES OF THE NON-INVOLVEMENT.

2.5.1 Introduction

In this section I shall particularly focus on the possible causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children. I will also touch on the assumptions made by most educators and principals, namely that parents are not involved because they are not interested in the education of their children, Davies, (2002:1).

In trying to prove that the assumptions made by the educators about the non-involvement of parents are not true, Davies, (2002:2), states the possible reasons why parents do not become actively involved in school activities:

- Not enough time/work schedule/single-parenthood
- Language barrier/cultural isolation
- Not knowing how to contribute.
Having consulted other sources I will go deeper into the possible reasons given by Davies and add other possible reasons as to why parents are reluctant or not involved in school matters.

2.5.2 Socio-economic factors

In this section I refer to some of the socio-economic factors that contribute to the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children. Under socio-economic factors I include home-conditions as a cause of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children.

2.5.2.1 Poverty

According to McGrath & Kuriloff (1999: 604), the major causes of the non-involvement of parents are the socio-economic background of both the learners and the parents. The two researchers further say that the efforts to involve the parents are in most cases biased by giving further advantage to rich parents while creating a big backlog to the involvement of the working class, the poorer people. Van der Linde, (1993:40), says that the rich parents can afford to support their schools financially. They can also support their children with their school work because they are literate, whereas the working class can hardly afford to feed their families and support the schools.

St. John, Griffith & Allen-Haynes, (1997:36) found that schools with middle class and rich families parents support their schools, while schools that serve low-income families have greater difficulties in getting parents involved and supporting the schools because of poverty. Karlsson (2002:335) substantiates this by pointing out that better-resourced schools are those whose parents are able to raise additional funds and provide superior education, thus perpetuating inequalities along the lines of class. Parents in the townships struggle to pay the school fees and cannot raise funds because of the poor communities that they stay in. A research by Lareau & Horvat (1999:37) has indicated that learners with more valuable social and cultural capital fare better in schools than do their peers with less social and cultural capital.

Despite the Schools Act coming up with an attempt to narrow the racial and class gap, opportunities are created for privatization of education that will create new forms of class inequalities. As long as poverty is still the problem the previously disadvantaged schools will struggle. Parents in advantaged schools are now fee-paying consumers, providing additional funds for the education of their children, while on the other side the government has changed the disadvantaged schools to non-school fees payment.
2.5.2.2 Low level of literacy at home

According to Strauss and Burger (2000:41), parents in previously disadvantaged communities are illiterate and poor; they cannot assist their children with school work and support the schools financially. Borg, cited by Mills and Gale (2004: 274) say that some parents believe that the responsibility for educating a child rests with the professionals.

Books like, ‘The resistant learner: Helping your child knock down the barriers to school success’, to empower parents are not available to most disadvantaged parents. Even if they were available, some parents are illiterate; they cannot read or write (Greene 2005:227). Umtapo cited by Molepo (2000:75) defines literacy as “a tool and a process of empowerment – empowering the participants to organize themselves and to change for better, the conditions, situations and callings in the way they find themselves”.

A child’s education extends beyond school premises and school hours, even if parents are illiterate they know more than the educators about their children and are likely to have taught them more too (Stern 2003:84). The context in which the rest of the day is spent has a fundamental impact on their official schooling, (Kadar Asmal, Health and Safety in Schools Conference, 2000, cited by Smith & Liebenberg, (2003:4).

2.5.2.3 Cultural factors

Parental involvement in education is beset with problems because it is influenced by a number of factors that include the parent’s social class and the environment in which the child develops into an adult. Konzal, cited by Bridgemohan, et al. (2005:8) say that more communication is needed when the child’s culture and social background differ from that of an educator. For parents it is even worse. They avoid going to school especially if the educator is not familiar with their language or culture. Most parents in the disadvantaged schools lack the required literacy levels to participate freely in educational things and to assist their children with school work and school things.

The learner’s background is the crucial factor that influences the learner’s performance, and the community constitutes part of this background. Springate & Stegelin, (1999:76) confirm the point by adding that the duties of the schools, families and communities is to have a common goal, i.e. to guide the children towards adulthood. They also feel that if the family and the community do not prioritize education above all and become involved in the education of their children, those children are more than likely to follow in their community’s steps.

2.5.2.4 Childcare problem

The issue of child care also is a problem i.e. the babies don’t have anyone to stay with at night, because during the day the babies are left at crèches.

2.5.3 Transport problems and shortage of resources

Molepo (2000:83) refers to the fact that numerous people have transport problems as a major stumbling block that inhibited from attending school functions and meetings. Most
parents from the townships do not have transport to attend school activities, especially at night. The distance from the homes to the schools is a huge one that cannot be traveled by foot, especially at night. Springate & Stegelin (1999: 24) agree with Molepo that when educators are implementing strategies to involve parents, the school must be sensitive to parents’ work schedules, families with single parents and families with transportation constraints.

2.5.4 Communication between school and home

Delgado-Gaitan (1991:21) refers to the fact that parents do not participate in the school activities because they are often unaware of the school and its operations. It is not that they don’t care or do not want to be involved. Stern (2003:7) confirms this by adding that all parents love and value their children and their education whereas some have a strange way of showing it.

Stern cited by Stern (2003:8) quotes that “even though getting involved in their children’s schooling is seen as a good thing by parents, many will feel unable to be involved or unsuited to such work. This does not mean that parents do not care”. Some do not even understand the circulars because of their level of education. Stern goes on to say those involving parents in schooling must go beyond rhetoric, and recognize realities of life in families and life in schools.

Some learners often do not give the circulars to their parents; while others know that their parents are illiterate, so they won’t be able to understand what is written on the circulars. According to Molepo (2000:76), it should be borne in mind that illiterate parents have wisdom which needs to be tapped. The children that decide on their own not to hand the circulars to parents because they claim that the parents are illiterate are not doing the right thing. If these children could read these circulars to parents, parents have special wisdom that can assist in many ways in the running of schools.

2.5.5 The Education System

2.5.5.1 Bureaucratic structures from the past

According to Janson (1996:95), the previous dispensation of the South African education system was characterised by complex bureaucratic structures where the decisions were taken at the highest level and little was given to parents at the lowest level. This made parents reluctant to be part of their children’s education.

Authors like Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Viljoen, 1994; Monareng, 1995, all confirm that most parents desire to be actively involved in the schooling of their children, but many feel that the educational system is inaccessible and also intimidating to them because of their levels of education, which is why they prefer to stay as far as possible from the institutions and the educated people. Stern (2003:11) defines schools as complex, professional and accountable institutions. It has got legal structures, policies and other formal rules that may scare parents away, but if these rules and policies can be simplified for parents they will understand.
2.5.5.2 Curriculum change & RNCS

For the past years educators have been struggling to cope with the new changes in education, e.g. the implementation of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE). Before they could get their feet on the ground, it was changed to New Curriculum Statement (NCS). According to the Department of Education, (1997b:27) the new system expects parents to play a crucial role in the education of their children; parents have to share the responsibility of education with the state. Singh, Mbokodi, & Msila, (2003:302) also confirm that the new system requires parents to use knowledge gained to build and develop their community and country. The question is how they can be expected to do that if OBE was difficult for educators who are educated to understand? Christie (1999:283) says that OBE was bound to fail because of its hasty implementation, and poor planning.

Potenza & Manyokolo (1999:236) support Christie in her statement that educators were not part of the process of OBE and they were expected to implement it without knowing what was happening. If parents are not involved in the planning and making of decisions in education they will be unable to assist and their involvement will be minimal or none.

The problem with curriculum reform is not that there is resistance to change, but, according to Fullan (1993:23), it is the “presence of too many innovations mandated or adopted uncritically”. If change involved implementing single, well developed, proven innovations, one at a time, see how it works for the people working with change, perhaps it could be blueprinted. Morrison (1998:17) agrees with this view because he says that “change is likely to be unsuccessful if it is over complex, not understood, poorly communicate, over demanding on individuals and existing resources, unclear, untested (especially if it will affect a large number of people (literate/illiterate parents in my case); of questionable benefit over existing practice, unclear on its benefit in existing practices, values and beliefs of the organization and the people in it, brought in without real consultation”. Jansen (2000) in his report suggests that “if South African wants to make sense of what is happening in education, they have to place it in the context of the stresses, strains and contradictions of society”. Parents are always sensitive about issues of education; now if new changes are just imposed on them they will feel totally alienated.

2.5.6 Historical reasons

Engelbrecht & Naicker, Green, cited by Oosthuizen (2003:20) say that in order to overcome parental apathy (the legacy of parental disempowerment), it is necessary to understand the historical reasons behind the fact that parents show so little interest (The disempowerment of parents in the education of their children is deeply rooted in the total control of education exercised by the previous political regime). The message of the previous state education authorities to parents of all racial groups was: “Give us your child to educate, let us do it as we see fit, and don’t interfere”, Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht cited by Oosthuizen (2003:21).

During the apartheid era parents in South African schools operated in an ethos of authoritarianism (Mureinek cited by Bray 1996: 35). In most schools parents were seen as clients who had to pay school fees and had nothing to do with the management and
functioning of schools (Heystek and Louw 1999: 21). In most previously disadvantaged black communities parent involvement had been virtually nonexistent owing to political reasons, poor socio-economic conditions, educator reluctance and parent apathy (Van Wyk 1996). Steyn and Van der Westhuizen (1993:36) are of the opinion that black parents are not eager to be involved while Heystek (1999:99) mentions that they have no tradition of participation in school activities and will take time before they fully get involved. According to Theron & Bothma, (1988:36), parents are hesitant about getting involved in school activities because of the long isolation of the schools from the community it is serving. Parents feel that they have been marginalized for a long period and they developed a negative attitude towards schools and school activities. From that time on the parents decided to stand at a distance and allow the “experts” (education authorities and educators) to do what they are qualified to do. Van Schalkwyk (1990:55) feels that educators are adequately trained to handle school matters, while parents feel that they are not.

2.5.7 Aspects of parenting

2.5.7.1 Introduction

The factors influencing the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children in South Africa these days are a multitude. Some of these factors such as: teenage parents, and houses headed by children were not big problems in the past as they are now. Bridgemohan, et al. (2005:10) says that schools and the education departments are faced with a huge task of involving parents in the education of their children and there are no clear policies to guide them. Even if policies were available the socio-economic factors of the country are also a major problem, because quite a number of children are not raised in proper homes, and parents are not working or are illiterate. Educators and parents are faced with the huge task of educating a child in totality, regardless of the socio-economic factors.

Springate & Stegelin (1999: 19) say that families, schools and communities have a common goal: to nurture and guide children to adulthood. Phillips (1994:137) agrees with Springate & Stegelin (1999: 19) that “Although the process of cultural transmission takes place as the child interacts with the total social environment; in contemporary American society we regard families and schools as being primarily responsible for seeing that preparation for adulthood takes place.” The problem of incomplete families will always cause problems when it comes to raising and educating children. All children deserve to grow up in a complete home with both parents. The problems of parental involvement in schools are often caused by some of the following:

2.5.7.2 Divorced parents/Blended families

Brazelton cited by Springate & Stegelin (1999: 161) says that “For all parents, creating and raising a family consists of one adjustment after another …. All families worry about making mistakes. Not only are mistakes unavoidable ….but parents are learning their job through mistakes”. The mistakes made by parents mostly affect the children involved.

American Heritage Dictionary of 1996 cited by Springate and Stegelin (1999:163) describes the following terms as:
Divorce is the legal process of two individuals dissolving a marriage relationship or the dissolution of a marriage bond by legal process or by accepted custom.

Blended family is defined as a family in which one or both spouses in a remarriage have a child or children from a former marriage. Other terms used to describe blended families are reconstituted families, stepfamilies, reorganized-, combined-, remarried-families.

Strydom (1997:13) explains the family as a distinct social structure with specific functions. He goes on to say that the family does not only provide physical care and protection for its members but, in this community of love, children are molded by both parents: corrected, advised and supported. It is therefore important for children to have both parents staying together with the child. Van Schalkwyk (1986:179) emphasises the importance of the family in that it provides a secure haven from which the child can venture into the world and engage with the unfamiliar. The family must also accept the responsibility of educating the child. According to Louw (1998:209) the family must initially undertake the educative function itself and later entrust the child’s formal education to the school but parents must still be involved. It must also remember that the family remains primarily responsible for and may not be excluded from the child’s education at all the time.

In instances of divorce it is difficult for educators to know who to involve as far as parental involvement is concerned. Divorce and separation has become a common thing all over the country. According to Brazelton and Walsh, cited by Springate and Stegelin (1999:163), divorce in the United States is so common that educators often report that a majority of the children in their classrooms are from homes where divorce is either currently occurring or has already taken place.
The diagram below shows the process of transition to the blended family, and the confusion that is caused for both educators and learners:

**Figure 2.1**

### The process of transition to the blended family

**Predivorced Family**

- Couple
- Parent-Child
- Sibling

**Divorced Family**

- Ex-Spouse
- Single-Parent
- Visiting Parent-Child

**Blended Family**

- Couple
- Parent-Child
- Sibling


Note: Dashed lines = subsystems influencing one another; Solid Lines = creation of new subsystems.

According to Strydom (1997:16) divorce, separation, and remarriage occur in more than 50% of today’s South African families, and research reflects that emotional repercussions can be expected for young children through adolescence and even adulthood. Springate and Stegelin (1999:26) state that successful parent involvement strategies depend greatly on the teacher’s ability to observe, assess both formally and informally, and then implement and evaluate specific, individualized, and measurable strategies for communication with parents and families. This on its own will help to stabilize the situation between the two parties, the school and the divorced couples. Springate & Stegelin add that the challenge of today’s educators and schools is to continue to strive for the basic traditional goals, these goals that preserve families while taking into consideration the many forces that affect the child and his or her family.
2.5.7.3 Single-parenting

Rapid changes happening in our daily lives represent one of the most dynamic features of our society. The contemporary family is not left unscathed by this. Children being abused, having permissive parenting and single parenthood have increasingly become part of the anti-child culture, and it has inhibited adequate education towards adulthood, Le Roux, (1992:94). Most children’s expectations for the future are dependent on parental guidance towards adulthood.

According to Jackson & Cooper cited by Le Roux (1992:97), in most houses that are headed by single-parents, parents are prevented by social and economic problems to participate in school activities even if they are interested. Single-parents are always busy; after work they must prepare food for their children; they don’t have enough time to attend to their children’s needs let alone to attend to school activities. Comer & Haynes (1991:273) stipulate that the problem of single parent families features very strongly in non-involvement of parents because the single mother or teenage mother lacks support to raise their children.

According to Rankin & Kern (1994:497), most of these children become uncontrollable and many such children drop out of school and become delinquent or pregnant before maturity. The absence of either parent may result in the children’s receiving less parental help, assistance and control, which may, in turn, nullify or hamper the children’s scholastic achievement because of the parents non-involvement.

2.5.7.4 Teenage parents

Challenges facing education these days are overwhelming. Demographic factors also impact negatively on parental involvement. There are many teenage girls who become parents before time. Since they are also children they cannot be responsible parents for their children. They themselves still need parents to take care of them and participate in schools activities. In most cases they are shy to be seen roaming around after the birth of a child; it will be worse to expect them to participate in the education of the child. Cairney and Munsie (1995:395) state that sometimes they have to leave school early to raise their children and because of what happened to them they will never want to go back to the same school to participate as parents.

Cairney and Munsie (1995:396) confirm that it is the working-class and lower-class families that are more likely to have had negative experiences as students themselves, and who may experience feelings of insecurity and intimidation in school settings.

Amato (1991:548) found that poor parental control exposed teenagers to increased risks of marrying earlier, which can also add to poor scholastic achievement.

2.5.7.5 Child-headed household

During the olden days we did not have children who stayed all alone in houses, but because of the Aids epidemic many children are forced to head households. People find themselves having to stay with more than five to six children whose parents have died because of Aids.
Since these children are young themselves they cannot be accountable for their young siblings and take part in schools activities. During the day they are at school and after school they have to be home to prepare for supper for their siblings. Kitavi (1995:247) says that the kind of responsibility placed on their shoulders is difficult for adults to maintain; how much more for them as young as they are? Adults in the disadvantaged communities do not participate in school activities. How can the young children who are heading houses be expected to participate and be responsible adults?

The government has a lot to do when it comes to socio-economic problems in our country. The children in such situations are expected to grow and become good citizens of the country with no one to look up to.

2.5.7.6 Grandparents

In most families, especially the disadvantaged families, grandparents are raising their grandchildren while parents are at work. According to Bridgemohan, Van Wyk and Van Staden (2005:18) the parents drop their children early in the morning and pick them up late in the afternoon. Sometimes the parents are working in other towns and staying there. They only come home once or twice in five to six months. The children are staying with their granny who has to see to their school work and be responsible for participating in school activities. Because of her age or because she is illiterate she cannot attend school functions, Weeto (1997:51).

In most cases in South Africa these days’ grandparents have the challenge of raising grandchildren because their parents have died of HIV and AIDS. This is the most unfortunate situation facing the already struggling families from disadvantaged communities.

The grandparent is in most cases too old to attend school functions or understand the circulars sent home.

2.5.8 The attitude of parents towards educators and visa versa

South Africa has been involved in great changes, politically and socially since 1990, and these changes also affected education. In the new millennium parental involvement at schools still remains a problem regardless of efforts taken to improve it. Heystek, (1999:11), found out that parents in black communities neglect their duties of being part of their children’s education.

The Department of education has made repeated calls that educators and parents have to work together for the sake and the progress of the child (Alexander, Bastiani and Beresford (1995:57). In spite of the repeated statements made by the education departments and educators over radio and television that parents and teachers are partners who share an equal relationship, the opposite is often realized in practice by both parents and by educators (St. John et al., 1997:78). Currently because of the educational changes in South Africa most researchers are concentrating on factors that might have an impact on the learner’s achievement, especially academic achievement (Myburgh, Niehaus & Grobler, (1999:165).
Some parents still consider the school as a ‘no go area’ because of the principals and educators who treat parental involvement as an intrusion in their own sphere of influence. Dimnock, O’Donoghue and Robb (1996:5) say that public education has absolutely no room for non-professionals. Principals and educators feel that they are qualified to deal with the matters of school activities without parents. Even if parents are called to come to school they will always be sceptical about visiting schools and educators. Epstein (1995:226) says that in most cases parents are called to come to school when there is a behavioural problem. This always causes tension between educators and parents. Swap (1993:65) says that parents of all kinds tend to treat the relationship between them and educators with caution, afraid to disturb or cause any problem in what is perceived as a vulnerable relationship for fear that the educator may take it out on the child.

Parents from all communities want the best education for their children, regardless of payment of school fees or financial support for their schools (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Davies, 1988). Sometimes parents who struggle to pay school fees are afraid of visiting schools, because they might be ridiculed or asked to pay the fees. Educators and principals have a tendency to disregard the communities that they serve and make as if they are unaware of the difficulties faced by parents and learners. In the end they alienate both parents and learners (Atkin, Bastiani and Goode 1988:104; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Monareng, 1995; Viljoen, 1994). Parent involvement in schools is then also affected by this kind of treatment. Educators’ attitudes towards parents and learners should change and educators should understand the dynamics of the communities that they serve and realize that education is also important for these communities (Davies, 1988 & Le Roux, 1994).

Parents, no matter where they live, have a lot going on in their lives; they need support and to be encouraged to deal with complex matters of life, Batey (1994:30). Life during the 21st century can be overwhelming for parents, so they need educators to be sensitive towards them. According to Walker, Colvin & Ramsey (1995:19-21) educators are blaming parents for not supporting their children. Delgado-Gaitan (1991:21) highlights the role that schools play in exclusion of parents from involvement in their child’s schooling via both practices and policy formation.

2.6 CONSEQUENCES OF NON-INVOLVEMENT.

2.6.1 Introduction

Having discussed the causes of non-involvement of parents in their children’s education and factors that affect it, I had to come back and discuss the consequences of the non-involvement of parents. The Education Department in South Africa, like all the other countries, is still struggling to find out the solution to the high failure rate of all grade 12 learners in the country especially in the disadvantaged communities. Parents who do not involve themselves with school activities can cause a high failure rate in schools. Most parents are only concerned about the results at the end of the year. At the beginning of the year they don’t care what happens in schools.

Croll & Moses in Miller (1999:77) say that educators often believe that behavioural and discipline problems are due to home factors and they are the responsibility of parents. Weeto (1997:5) confirms the statement by educators that, they (educators) blame the
parents for not supporting their children and not giving them enough love and attention. The children then come at school and cause problems because they demand attention from the educators. The child is compared to a ‘plant’. If the plant is not given enough food, care and sunshine, it will die. Our children need support from adults to grow and be responsible adults. A child who is brought up in a family that loves and cater for him will not give problems in schools. Some of the problems caused by learners in schools are related to seeking for attention that is lacking from the child’s home.

Meyer & Steyn (1992:32) say that educators at schools are assigned with difficult tasks - to educate, mould, guide, lead and build an immature learner into a responsible adult. At the same time the two authors point out that the educators must create a relationship of trust with the learner so that he may dynamically and supportively foster and promote an interest in self-obtained knowledge. According to Van der Walt and Dekker (1982:25); Van Wyk (1987: 88) that knowledge is called “opvoeding” which is defined as the process which occurs when an educator, who is normally an adult in a position of authority, deliberately applies himself to form and guide a learner in a religious sense. The educator cannot do the above mentioned task without the help of the parent. The children spend most of his/her time at school and at home. Parents have to assist the educator and play their part when the child is with them. The child must see that what is done at home and at school is the continuation of molding him/her towards a responsible adult. If one of the two sides is lacking the consequences could be bad.

Van der Walt, et al. (1982:228) say that the task of the educator in relation to educational training is to contribute formatively, creatively and holistically to the development of a learner’s logical and analytical skills as well as to provide spiritual inspiration and guidance. They also state that in order for the educator to fulfill that task, he must not only be suitably trained, both professionally and didactically, but must also guide the learner by the example of his own ethical life style: the essence of education is the fertilization of the learners’ spirit by the spirit of the educator – however, an educator cannot give what he himself does not have. Educators need to lead by example.

During the process the educator is faced with many challenges from the parents, community and the government. The educator at the same time must discipline the learner if he/she is showing signs of wayward behaviour. Exercising discipline in order to mould an immature learner is a necessity, according to Voster (in Botha 1996: 52), who is quoted as saying: “order must prevail or chaos will reign.” If educators lose control learners will do as they please the school will be affected and there will be no proper tuition taking place. Learners will attend school as they wish.

2.6.2 Lack of effective communication

People working together towards one goal need to communicate frequently. De Villiers (2005:5) says that there is no successful organization without good communication; communication between parents and educators is considered crucial so as to have good results. If the educator and the parents do not communicate, they cannot discuss the problems pertaining to the learner who is suppose to bring them together. In most cases what is perceived as an “uncaring” attitude is actually a barrier in communication or a fear of the unknown, (Batey (1996:18)).
Lack of communication can cause lots of problems and wrong assumptions from both sides, i.e. the parent’s sides and the educator’s sides. Davies (2002:3) says that educators tend to think that parents don’t care about their children if they are not involved in school activities. Parents on the other side think that it is the duty of educators to educate children.

2.6.3 Bad school attendance

Children are more brilliant than we as adults think. Roger (2003:26) emphasizes the responsibilities of parents to see to it that their children attend school and behave well at school. The child will know that the parents and his educators never meet and he will use that opportunity not to attend school, knowing that his parents think that he does attend school and the educators will never meet his educators and parents have to improve if the schools want to achieve its mission of promoting educational excellence for all children.

2.6.4 High failure rate and drop-out

According to Colombo (2006:315), most educators identified lack of school preparedness and insufficient family involvement in the education of their children as the key factors that interfered with the academic achievement of most learners from previously disadvantaged communities. Most of these learners fail grade 12 in numbers when compared to the other learners from advantaged communities with parents who are actively involved in their education. Some parents always blame the school and the educators if their children fail. Colombo goes on to say that family involvement has a powerful influence on educational success.

Most parents do not know that their involvement can decrease the failure rate at school. Colombo (2006:316) says that parents see the school and the community as two different worlds. Some parents trust educators to be the experts in their duties and felt it was disrespectful to question any classroom practice, and others, for a variety of reasons were not at ease inside the school premises and to be near teachers.

According to Smit & Liebenberg, (2002a; 2002b) some parents feel alienated by the schools and the educators because of their financial background. Smit & Liebenberg (2003:2) confirm that educators may misjudge a child if they don’t know his background. In most cases educators alienate the learners in front of the others and these learners end up dropping out of school because of being alienated, shouted at, and ridiculed in front of their friends. They also highlighted the fact that the schools and educators can play a central role in exacerbating such circumstances. On the other hand the children, especially those from troubled backgrounds – tend to leave school prematurely as a result of an unawareness and insensitivity to their needs and contexts on the part of their educators. Croll & Moses cited by Miller (1999:77) says that educators tend to believe that behavioural and discipline problems shown by learners at schools are due to home factors and therefore the responsibility of parents. In most cases other learners are using a school as a refuge from the bad life that they experience in their homes, so if they find alienation also at school they drop-out and become juveniles. Some rebel against all adults, i.e. the parents and the educators, because of the bad experiences from both adults, at home and at school.
2.6.5 Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is one of the biggest problems that South African teenagers of the 21st century are faced with. Children become sexually active very early and fall pregnant. Almost all families, especially disadvantaged families are sitting with unplanned babies that are brought home by their teenage girls. According to Amato (1991:544) these girls will opt for marriage at an early age because of the poor parental control and poor scholastic achievement. A teenager cannot afford to raise a child and at the same time deal with the demanding task of school work. These teenagers according to Rankin & Kern (1994:495) will find themselves having to make choices that will lead them to have to drop out of schools. Bartell (1999:19) states that the teenage mother’s schooling will be disrupted and this is detrimental to her future because she will have limited future career prospects, and she will contribute to a lower socio-economic status for herself and the baby. More and more bad citizens for the country are born out of wedlock by young parents. The teenagers themselves need parental control, parental assistance and parental/teacher guidance about their own lives. How can they be expected to raise children when they themselves are children?

In most instances when you try to find out how they became pregnant, you will discover that the babies were conceived during school hours. Parents leave houses early in the morning for work, leaving a child preparing to go to school. The teenager will dress up in full school uniform and take her school bag. Since they travel on their own to school, they never reach the school destination. They (the girl and boy) use their cell phones to contact each other and they meet at the boy’s house and babies are made. Our teenagers lack self-esteem and as a result they are easily influenced. They cannot cope with peer pressure and the poverty that surrounds them.

Parents are put under tremendous stress by these teenagers. Parents do not understand how their daughters are becoming pregnant, because according to them (parents) their children are not sexually active. Macleod (1999:15) says “It appears that parents play a very small role in transferring information to their teenage children”. According to Rozakis cited by Macleod (1999:15) “It is also clear that other parents are still afraid of talking about sex to their children because of cultural or religious beliefs but the media is doing it anyway”. Once children are left alone and they become bored to watch TV, they tend to explore all channels in the TV, and that is when they will see all the sex materials and try to experiment what they have seen. So the media also plays a big role in influencing children to be sexually active before the right age.

Rankin & Kern (1994:495) argue that single-parent families find children uncontrollable and that many such children drop out of school and become delinquents or pregnant before maturity. Some single parents agree with the two authors that they’ve lost control of their own children. The sad thing about teenage pregnancy is that some of them come from broken families, they are raised by single-parents and they add more burdens by becoming single-parents themselves. The boyfriends of teenagers seldom own up to the responsibility of the newborn baby. Other girls find out after the baby is born that they are HIV positive, some die thereafter and others survive for a while and parents must assist in the raising of the babies.
2.6.6 Discipline in South African Schools

South Africa as a country has undergone drastic changes; some of those changes have affected the children positively whilst others have been affected negatively. Schools in these cases have been mostly affected by discipline problems. Robertson (1999:78) says that some children at schools can be disruptive because ‘they have been subject to distorted or inadequate care throughout childhood due to a variety of family and economic difficulties’. These children who have suffered neglect from homes will demand attention at schools from educators. Some of them (learners) are repeating classes because they cannot cope academically. In addition, school failure and behavioural problems are strongly associated. Jones & Jones (1995:6) stipulated some social factors in the life of a child that may positively or negatively influence his/her behaviour. They mentioned family break-ups, poverty, neglect, stressful lives and substance abuse either by the child himself or by the parents. Jones & Jones (1995:6) also mentioned the issues of emotional stress and inadequate skills.

Since the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools by the Department of Education (2000:12) most parents have given up disciplining their children. Though the Department of Education (2000:12) has given educators a booklet to follow when disciplining children most educators complain that these rules do not help parents in disciplining their children especially in black communities. Children are inclined to treat these rules as a joke because they are used to being asked to do the so called punishment as their daily chores at home, e.g. scrubbing floors, cleaning windows and working in the garden. Educators in most schools in the townships are still looking for good alternatives to corporal punishment that will work for their children. They claim that the punishments prescribed in books only work for children who are not used to doing chores in their homes.

2.6.7 Child abuse/neglect

Walker, Colvin & Ramsey (1995:273) have highlighted the importance of both educators and families in providing children with safety, security and social support. Walker et al. (1995: 19; 39) further mentioned the impact of the environment in which psychological trauma is incurred as a result of negative parental behaviour, abuse, participation in crime, incarceration, injury or school failure. Children need protection from any kind of abuse especially by adults. The child will grow up and never trust adults, if parents at home do not care for their children.

According to Smit & Liebenberg (2002:1) neglecting, ill-treating, alienating and scolding a child is one of the worst things to do in trying to solve the behavioural problems of a child. Unfortunately most adults believe that believe that punishing a child is the best way of getting him/her to cooperate. The laws and regulations protecting children are against the abuse of children. Neglecting our children is killing the nation and destroying the future of our country.

Because educators and parents are not working together all these bad influences can happen unnoticed and destroy the child for ever. The consequences of parental non-involvement are endless. On the other hand psychologists and the law protecting the children believe otherwise, that disciplining a child is totally different from what adults
believe in and all children are protected by law. According to the Republic of South African Constitution Act (SA 1996(a) section 28(1) children have a right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. Section 28(2) of the Constitution determines that the best interest of the child would be the decisive factor in each matter that affects the child. Because of its important implications for the interest of the child, it must be emphasized again that section 29 of the Constitution provides that every child has a right to basic education.

2.7 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

2.7.1 Introduction

Authors like Epstein Bastiani, Lemmer & Van Wyk have done much trying to improve parental involvement in school activities. Their endeavours bore some fruit in some parts of the country, but there is still a huge outcry from the educators that they are pulling alone, without the assistance from parents all over the world.

Colombo (2006:316) refers to parental involvement as building a bridge between home and school. The bridge must be used by both parents and educators so that communication must happen at all times. Parents must visit schools and assist in the education of their children and educators must visit homes so as to have a clear picture of their learners’ background.

2.7.2 Parental empowerment.

This study suggests that, together with enabling legislation, schools can develop valuable initiatives to make parents more active and equal partners. The legislation to reform schooling in a democratic South Africa has focused attention on the rights and responsibilities of parents as empowered stakeholders in education (SASA, (1996:14). The parents should receive the necessary information, guidance and support from the school to prepare them for co-operation and participation.

Without empowerment, the parents will find it difficult to contribute fruitfully to the welfare of schools. Molepo (2000:73) suggest that the parties involved, that is the parents, educators and learners should be empowered in order to work as a three legged pot. If one of the legs breaks, the pot will not be able to function properly. It is necessary for all parties to be empowered, and then the partnership will be effective because they depend on one another. Johnson (1991: 175) says that one of the basic features of a partnership is that it involves more than one person. The parties will then be able to work together with their varying interest, different ideas, abilities, skills and experiences for the sake of more effective operation and goal achievement at schools.

Molepo (2000: 74) says that if parents are empowered to be able to read they can listen to their children’s reading regularly at home. He goes on to say that if every parent can spend at least ten minutes daily listening to their children read, the children’s reading performance will improve drastically. Molepo (2000:74) confirms that all children benefit from extra practice and extra motivation especially if it comes from the parent showing interest in the child’s education. The parent will also benefit from increased confidence and self-esteem at being given a valid part to play, in the child’s learning.
Parental empowerment is very crucial for educating children especially in township schools. Illiterate parents will also benefit from helping their children; they can learn together and become more close to each other.

2.7.3 Interrelationships among families, schools and communities

Children are raised in different families and those families form a community, Springate & Stegelin (1999:17). The family serves as the “cradle” in caring for and nurturing of children. The family serves to wrap the child in the kind of security from which the child emerges comfortably to interact with peers, educators and adults in a variety of settings and to take a place in the world. Clinton (1996:7) confirms the statement by borrowing the African proverb that says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” In a community everyone needs each other. According to Charles & Charles cited by Colombo (2006:57) each community member needs each other, and as a sense of community can be built among class members, so can it also be built between educators and community members? Every member of the community will be concerned about each other and be willing to assist where he/she can. In raising a child you will need a community. The community is made of mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, grandparents, school administrators, educators, neighbours, and other individuals within the community. All are a part of this village. As the child intertwines with the lives of each individual he gains something that will contribute towards his growth. No child is born without a potential, but that potential needs to be groomed by adults around the child.

Each and every member of that village/community holds a common desire to raise healthy and happy children in a safe and comfortable environment. There are a variety of factors affecting the communities in trying to reach their goals. One of the major challenges is the economic struggle that faces lots of families, where parents have to leave early for work every day and come back late. According to Daniels (1996:2) in a Family Re-Union V Conference in 1996 co-chaired by President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, parent panelists indicated that they all have a desire:

- To have more time with their children,
- To be able to provide their children with a decent standard of living without sacrificing quality parenting,
- To know that their children are in nurturing, safe, and healthy environments while the parents are at work or training,
- To have employers who understand, value, and respond appropriately to family issues.

All of the above prove that parents want the best for their children regardless of their family situations, or economic backgrounds. The schools have to play a big role in bringing the community close to the school. De Villiers (2005:4) suggests that the community must feel that they are part of the school, they own the school. The school grounds and the school hall must be made accessible to the community so that there can be less vandalism and fewer break-ins. If the school has a computer lab, parents and the members of the community can be taught skills in technology so that the school will not be seen as an isolated Island. Schools must have programs that involve the community. McLaughlin (2001:14) argues that community-based programmes and organizations have
a potential of making significant contributions to young people’s learning and development.

2.7.4 Parents as partners in education

The South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2002:2) also suggest that the educators of the 21st century have to recognize the parents as partners in education, and promote a harmonious relationship with them. SACE also states that it is not the sole responsibility of an educator to educate a child – it is a shared responsibility amongst two adults, i.e. an educator and a parent. The two have to work together harmoniously so that the results can be good and fruitful. Catron and Allen (1993:51) agree about parent involvement and argue that it should start very early while the child is still young and easy to handle.

Parents should be given opportunities to have responsible decision-making that will affect their children and families. Epstein (1995:705) states that such decision-making should mean “a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas”. With recent changes and development in education, parents are seen as solutions to lots of problems in the education rather than part of the problems.

Parents must be invited to come to school even if there’s no problem or something wrong done by the child. Tea, cakes, scones, baked by parents could be served. There should be discussion around disciplining children and bringing them up. Griffith (2000:162) suggests that principals should encourage parental involvement as school leaders at schools and that must be their key role.

Educators and school administrators should teach parents how to be active participants in education. Mills and Gale (2004:274) say that the educators and administrators must not only invite the parents. If they don’t come, they must find out why they have not come, because most of the time parents are intimidated by the school and its policies. They need to do things differently, e.g.:

- To teach them how to be actively involved without scaring them away
- To make it easy for them so that they feel comfortable to do things and practice what they’ve taught them
- To listen to all regardless of the background of people
- To treat them the same and accept them equally
- To give them chances to make decisions and to share knowledge with educators.

Mercure (1995:2) explains that in countries like the US, parents are used to helping educators to discourage misbehaviour in classrooms. Principals can invite parents to come to school and ‘baby-sit’ unruly children, and be given work for the children to repeat e.g. the rules of the school. Rogers (2003:71) emphasizes the use of parents at schools, to emphasise the responsibilities of parents towards their children’s school attendance and behaviour at school. Both educators and parents can draw up rules and agree on strategies that contain clear expectations from learners towards attaining acceptable behaviour at home and at school. All parents should always be informed about their children’s behaviour patterns at school. According to Rogers (2002:72) the home-school approach can achieve good outcomes and reduces educator’s problems about misbehaving children at school.
2.7.5 The importance of a safe and healthy climate at school for participation

An effective school is identified by researchers like Lezotte and Jacoby (1990:84) as a safe and orderly environment. Lezotte & Jacoby (1990:147) say that in “an orderly, purposeful businesslike atmosphere which is free from threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive, and is conducive to teaching and learning”. In this context, they spoke about the word safe, referring to the physical safety within the school building and its surroundings. They also emphasise that an orderly, purposeful atmosphere is important for parental involvement as well as for children’s learning.

Parents also should feel a sense of safety and security in the school buildings and surroundings. If they do not, they won’t say a word; they will never express their discomfort or fear; they will simply not attend any activities at school.

2.7.6 Role models (Parents and educators)

Lots of changes in our global world have brought about advantages as well as disadvantages. During the olden days most children admired the teaching profession and also wanted to be teachers, because teachers were seen as role models. According to Wolfgang (1999:95) teachers should at all times be exemplary in being responsible and committed to people around them.

Vockell (1991:279) is also of the opinion that generally parents and teachers should reinforce behaviours that are compatible with any desirable behaviour in children through being exemplary. Roffey & O’Reirdan (2003:15) says that this kind of behaviour from teachers and adults should be consistent with what the learners expect from adults as grown-ups. Parents and educators must display good behaviour that is characterised by good manners and a helping hand to others in need. Oprah in her talk show (Children are falling and failing) emphasised that children want to know whether adults do care for them and love them; they want to be special. Children want to be encouraged that they ‘can make it’ in this difficult world that we live in. She further emphasized that adults must be mentors for children. ‘Mentoring is the key: Having a positive role model, that’s all a child needs’ to grow and be a responsible adult and a good citizen of the country. The child’s moral, behaviour, attitude and values are dependent on how we as adults practice them in front of the children.

Coles (1997:5) states the following in his book, How to Raise a Moral Child:

“The child is a witness; the child is an ever-attentive witness of grown-up morality – or lack of thereof; the child looks and looks for cues as to how one ought to behave, and finds them galore as we parents and educators go about our lives, making choices, addressing people, showing in action our rock-bottom assumptions, desires, and values, and thereby telling those young observers much more than we may realise.”

All of the above is based on the fact that children in general, tend to worship their heroes and imitate those whom they appreciate and admire. This is why parents, adults and educators should set an example for the young generation. Children in most cases cannot choose between what is right and wrong, only if they recognize a person as their hero will they follow whatever that particular person is doing.
2.7.7 Policy for parental involvement at schools

According to Stern (2003:11) schooling is complex and it is professional and accountable and it cannot be taken for granted. The school is composed of legal structures, policies and other formal rules and some of them may be annoying distractions from the ‘real world’, but they are in essence the instruments that give those involved the right and the responsibility to govern accordingly.

Educators do not know in certain cases how to involve parents in the education of their children. Epstein & Dauber (1993: 61) suggest that schools should have a policy for involving parents in schools and at homes to work with their children in school work. Delgado-Gaitan (1991:21) mentions that the schools play a role in excluding parents in the education of their children with both practices and policy formations.

According to Boyer (1991:33) the policies must be well structured; they must “build bridges between home and school”. Through empowering parents, bridges can be easily built and partnerships will be strong. Colombo (2006:316) made it clear that it is undisputable that trying to build relationships between educated and uneducated people requires more effort to create and to sustain friendship, partnership and understanding. The policies must be structured in such a way that both parties must gain from the partnership, and they must see the need to be involved. Fleisch (2002:83) state that parents must not feel that they are used by principals to rubber stamp decisions taken by them. Parents must know and understand the policies that include them. Stern ((2003:20) says that these policies must be discussed with parents and a decision must be taken to implement them with all the stakeholders. A format of that plan is drawn in Addendum C.

According to Stern (2003:14) the school policies on information should follow three golden rules:

- Informing parents about good things and bad things in an annual report
- Informing parents about things happening at school in the language that they understand
- Informing parents regularly, about school things and giving an opportunity for them to reply, using home-work book or diary.

The policies should stress that school is about the whole life of a child, and that educators need to draw on the outside world, including the world of pupils’ families to educate children.

2.7.8 Improving communication between parents and educators

Clear communication is the key to keeping things running effectively in any organization. Parents would love to know what is going on and how they can assist to improve their situations at schools. De Villiers (2005:3) states that in schools where there is regular communication between parents and schools, parental involvement is effective. He also suggests the use of the available technology, such as E-mail to contact parents on a regular basis rather than the waste of papers (letters) that sometimes don’t even reach the
Parents also need to be empowered in using the new technology that is available, e.g. e-mail, and messages (sms) through the cell phones.

DePree cited by Blackmore (1995: 45) states that in “most organizations, there is a common bond of interdependence, mutual interest, interlocking contributors, and simple joy”. He goes on to say that part of the art of leadership is to see that this common bond is maintained and strengthened and this can only be done if communication is open and clear. Some people will ask the question “How do you define good communication? What does it accomplish?” Good communication is the prerequisite for teaching and learning. It is also the way people bridge the gaps formed by a growing school or company, DePree cited by Blackmore (1995:46). Good communication is not not only sending and receiving information, nor is it simply a mechanical exchange of data, because no matter how good the communication is, if no one listens, all is lost. The best communication forces you to listen and act.

If parents listen to educators and educators listen to parents, then a healthy atmosphere for working together is built. When communication is good most things go according to plan, co-operation increases, problem solving improves.

Bourdieu (1997:49) states that some parents are aware of the fact that some educators do not want to work with them or listen to them because the educators feel that parents don’t have the required qualifications to make decisions pertaining to the school’s activities. Educators in the community who enable some and inhibit others from having their say in what counts as ‘good’ schooling, must know that is not acceptable. They must eliminate the extent to which some individuals or groups are effectively disempowered or marginalised as a consequence of their class, gender and racial identities, McInerney (2002:5). Most parents undermine themselves and see educators as people knowing better than, Crozier cited by Mills and Gale (2004:274). On the other hand some educators do not want to give credence to parental knowledge because they feel that they could be undermined in their profession as professionals, Hughes & MacNaughton (2000:242). Educators in schools who hold to this position have little incentive to collaborate or communicate with parents and believe that parent knowledge can be ignored without their professional standards being compromised.

Other educators understand that their ‘sense of professional identity is derived from their capacity to listen to, learn from, and move forward with the communities they serve’, Nixon, Allan & Mannion (2001:334). In such cases community-led change is brought by ‘the concerns and the agency of community members and groups rather than by the interest of the professional groups involved’, (Nixon et al., 2001:335). Professional educators also need to work with communities and facilitate their meaningful involvement in the future direction of education. Educators have a tendency to assume that ‘non-participation implies an apathetic or passive citizenry, lacking in both expertise and motivation’, Blackmore (1995:59).

De Villiers (2005:3) mentioned the following ways of trying to bridge the gap of communication between parents and educators:

- Educators should take a lead in inviting parents for informal meetings, like breakfast clubs, forming groups to teach each other handwork.
Parents must not always be contacted if there is a problem, positive news must also be sent home.
Publishing days when educators are available to meet with parents
Programs to empower parents about issues about the school
Programs to help single-parents or divorce parents to work with their children.

If all of the above could be done in a professional way, communication will be effective in schools and all stakeholders will benefit, i.e. parents, educators and learners.

2.7.9 Parents need to strategize their time for everything.

Jesse Jackson cited by Springate & Stegelin (1999: 249) say that parents have to make time and room in their hearts, in their houses and in their daily schedule for their children. They also added that no poor parent is too poor to do that, and no middle-class parent is too busy to do that; our children must be our priority. The average parents spend four (4) hours a day with their child. That is not enough. No matter how busy the parent is she/he must make time to spend with the child/children. The parents must raise their expectations from their children and also create a discipline by expectations. The child must know what his/her parents expect from him/her at all times.

All parents should be advised to read books and read stories for their children. Parents should start early to read stories for their children during the age of three (3) upwards. During that time the parents will know whether their child could listen and hear properly. If the child ask the parents to repeat the story the parents must make time for those contacts they are very important in the life of a child. There is an English phrase that says: “Monkey see, monkey do”. If the child sees parents reading the child will do the same, and if the child masters reading freely at his/her own time that will give that child foundation for any study in future. According to Pearson (1996:12) every child has a right to read and understand and reading opens the mind of the child and lays a foundation for knowledge.

Parry, (2000: 68) states that we need to do away with the stereotype that people from low socio-economic background don’t care about their children’s education because that is not true. Parry adds that these beliefs or generalisations about people make it difficult for problems to get the attention that they deserve. Parents from low socio-economic background are poor but they need to concentrate on the education of their children so as to improve their situation and status. However, despite such impediments, there need to be ways of closing the gap between the wealthy and the poor parents. Lareau & Horvat (1999:37), state that the ways of closing the gap between schools and community is to enhance propinquity between teachers and parents or community members. This can be achieved or done by working together within the spirit of Masifunde (“Let us educate together”). The problems facing our disadvantaged communities can be solved if we join hands in the spirit of Masifunde to face the challenges of the 21st century.

2.7.10 Changes in the Education System

After the 1994 democratic elections, a non-racial education system based on the principle for equity was instituted. The new government stated categorically the need of parental involvement in the education of their children. After elections in 1994, legislation
introduced important reforms which impact on parent involvement. Recent legislation, like the South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996:14), compels parents to participate in the governance of schools in a form of School Governing Bodies (SGB’s) (Botha, et. al 2003:19:195). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996a) introduced the democratization of the education system and the concept of partnership among stakeholders in education through co-operative governance. The implications of school reforms for parent involvement have created an environment more conducive to parent involvement in schools, but, actual parent involvement in South African schools remains weak (Heystek and Louw 1999, 21). The real changes have to take place at local level where school managers and governors play a crucial role in translating national initiatives into meaningful local policy and practice.

Even after 1994, the changes made by the Education Department are still done by the people on top without consulting the parents. According to Sandall (1998:136) parents feel that they are being used by both the Education Department and the schools to rubberstamp decisions taken without their involvement and being problem solvers. Most parents are still not satisfied about the issue of abolishing corporal punishment in schools. Others are still concerned in that they felt that there were no viable alternatives to corporal punishment: Oosthuizen (2002:4) says, ‘The abolition of corporal punishment in schools has left a gap which cannot be filled and this has led to all kinds of disciplinary problems in schools’. Parents feel that some rules and policies are just imposed on them without taking into consideration how they felt. This was also seen in the Beeld newspaper, (19 November 2001) which stated: ‘Punishment guide not helping much with discipline – wonderful theories not always practical’. Prinsloo cited by Oosthuizen (2002:4) states that in most cases parents feel that the collapse of discipline in South African schools is the fault of the Department of Education and measures proposed by it to deal with discipline. Educators have guiding booklets to follow when a child has a discipline problem, Department of Education (2000:12); Schulze & Dzivhani (2002:125). The educators feel that the measures stipulated in this booklet do not work in township schools.

2.7 11 Involving parents in policy and curriculum designing

Policy designers and curriculum designers do not have parents as decision makers and people who are going to be affected. According to (Rugh & Bossert, 1998:166), policy makers view the community as the problem if anything goes wrong in the education delivery. Hall and Engelbrecht (1999:231) point out clearly that parents need to be involved in their children’s education and this involvement must include insight into their children’s progress, participation in decision-making, policies, curriculum and being critical of information on educational issues.

Mallory & New (1994:11) stated that to be included is not merely to be present, but to participate, to influence, and to be influenced by the communities in which one lives, works and learns.

We all know that it’s not always easy to involve parents in curriculum designing but they must at least understand the aim of the curriculum that is taught to their children. Sterns (2003:26) state that the curriculum should be applicable to the rest of pupils’ lives. It must not be for the benefit of the subjects taught, but it must be for the benefit of the
pupils and it should help them understand, grow and take hold of the world, and become more ‘real’, and that must be explained to the parents.

Educators should try to involve parents by writing letters to the parents to find out their skills in certain curriculum area where they feel that parents can assist in classrooms. (See examples in Addendums B), Adapted from Stern (2003:47).

2.8 CONCLUSION

It is without any doubt that effective home-school relationships can be related to improved learner academic achievement and increased community support for schools, De Villiers (2005:2). The literature emphasizes the positive effects on parents of improved family-school relations, such as increased confidence of the parents, Bastiani & Wolfendale (1996:74); better understanding of what is happening in school, Swap (1993:10) and feeling of empowerment, especially evident in disadvantaged communities. Swap (1993:10) also pointed out that educators also benefit when family-school relationships improve because they experience...”support and appreciation from parents and a rekindling of their own enthusiasm for problem solving”.

Parents need to be empowered to be able to participate in school activities. Even if they want to help they don’t know how to empower themselves about school issues. According to Mkwanazi (1994:29), parents feel that educators are qualified and paid to educate the children. Educators themselves need to be trained how to involve parents in school activities, because in their general training that is not included. Hamby (1992:16) points out that this lack of training by educators is serious as parents are unlikely to become involved without intervention from the schools and educators.

Their participation in school governance (SGBs) is compulsory (SASA) (1996:14), but their level of education and lack of empowerment on educational issues is a problem. According to De Villiers (2005:2) the participation of parents in (SGBs) is not enough, because the number of parents in the governing bodies is far less than the total number of the whole parent body. De Villiers (2005:3) advises parents and educators to meet more frequently in real contact and in informal gathering, not only through circulars sent to homes.

According to Rogers (2003:73) parents must also be exposed to the real situation at schools, and not only read about these problems from the circulars or hear during meetings so as to understand the problems faced by the educators. The gap between schools and the communities must be closed totally so that communication must be freely available from both sides.
CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 Introduction

According to Taylor & Bogdan (1998:3) the term research methodology refers to the philosophical basis on which the study has been built. As a researcher I know that underlying any research there is a philosophical basis. Creswell (2003:6) suggests that the assumptions researchers have determine how and what they will learn about their investigation. As stated by Burrel & Morgan cited by McFarlane (2000:16) that social science depends on the assumptions the researcher makes about the nature of the social world and the way in which it will be investigated. Burrel & Morgan (1979:24) say that the way in which a particular person views the world determines the particular paradigm in which the study is located. They say that researchers in an interpretive paradigm seek to understand the world from the viewpoint of the participant. They also add that the social reality is emerging and is developed by the individual living in it.

3.1.2 Interpretive paradigm

The approach to this study falls within the interpretive paradigm as explained by, among others, Burrel and Morgan (1979: 28). The aim of the study is to find out what can be done to promote parental involvement in the education of children, so as to contribute to the children’s academic results. The study goes deeply into the roots of the problem and tries to find solutions that will improve parental involvement in the education of children, so as to ease the burden of educators and to bring parents, learners and educators together.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998:3) say that the interpretive tradition works towards developing an understanding of the participant’s own view of his/her experience of the social reality. Burrel and Morgan (1979:28) concur that researchers in this paradigm seek to understand the world from the viewpoint of the participant.

This study will focus on the interpretive paradigm as stated by McFarlane (2000:27) that in this paradigm there is one objective: “to understand and interpret social situations by becoming part of the situations or close to the people involved with them, to listen to their stories and to share their perceptions and experiences”. Jansen van Rensburg cited by McFarlane (2000:27) believes that researchers in this paradigm believe that the world is “constructed” rather than “found”. Benzies & Allen cited by McWilliam, Danby & Knight (2004:400) concur that “individuals structure their external world by their perceptions and interpretations of what they conceive that world to be”.

McFarlane (2000:32) states that the interpretive paradigm has been criticised for its emphasis on individual experiences and perceptions at the expense of focusing on the social structures which influence those experiences and perceptions.

The main aim of my study is to contribute towards changing parents and educators assumptions about each other and building constructive relationships amongst them. I had to visit the schools and speak to all the stakeholders, namely the parents and SGB’s,
educators, principals and SMT’s and the learners. From that experience I knew that a trusting relationship between me and the participants was a crucial thing if I really wanted to understand their world, so I had to work on that.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Introduction

Lankshear and Knobel (2004:27) say that the research design is something that can be thought of as an appropriate procedure or guideline for doing something under certain conditions. They also emphasize the fact that the success of a research study depends crucially on its being well designed, which means that the researcher has to be alert to the importance of design from the outset. Researchers cannot launch an investigation without first having thought about what sort of concepts, theories, methods, instruments and the like might best fit the question asked, and how these can be arranged in a systematic way.

Lankshear and Knobel (2004:27) say that in order to develop the research design, one has to think about five issues:

- The research purpose/aims/objectives should be made clear for a good-quality research that relates to the research focus in the form of the research questions and/or research problem.
- The research design should be guided by a theoretical and conceptual framework that helps clarify the questions, problems and purposes concerned about the topic.
- The research design should contain a strategy for collecting and organizing data that are relevant to the research problems and/or questions.
- After collecting the data one needs a strategy to analyse the data. The most important thing about data analysis is that it must be consistent with the research purpose/research question/problem, aims and objectives.
- Finally, the research design must contain a strategy for interpreting the data in order to provide findings and conclusions from the research, so as to advance to the recommendations or implications based on the investigation.

Mouton (2001:55) defines the research design as a plan or a blueprint of how the researcher intends conducting his/her research.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

Bogdan & Biklen (2003:261) describe qualitative research as “an approach to social science research that emphasises collecting descriptive data in natural settings, using inductive thinking, and emphasizing understanding the subjects’ point of view”. Leedy (1997:105) defines qualitative researchers as researchers who begin by asking more general questions and collecting an extensive amount of verbal data from a small number of participants, and presenting their findings with words/descriptions that are intended to accurately reflect the situation under study. Leedy defines this study as “a study that may then conclude with tentative answers or hypotheses about what was observed. …These tentative hypotheses may then form the basis of future quantitative studies designed to test the proposed hypotheses”. Qualitative researchers enter the setting/context of the
respondents/participants with open minds (Leedy 1997: 106), prepared to immerse themselves in the complexity of the situation.

Qualitative researchers place much importance on data being gathered in natural or real-life settings as the ‘action’ happens – for instance, in playgrounds, classrooms, at a work area and in the communities. Lankshear & Knobel (2004: 69) describe qualitative researchers as researchers who aim to collect data that is contextualized. They explain that such data take into account the kind of school and community in which the research study takes place, the socio-economic status of the community in which the school is located, and the history of the community.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998:7) describe qualitative research as research that produces descriptive data about people, where even people’s own words are used. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:373) explain that in qualitative research words are used to describe and interpret findings rather than numbers. Gerson and Horowitz (2002:199) describe qualitative research as a direct encounter with the participants to investigate how people construct, interpret and give meaning to their experiences.

The research comprises of qualitative components, reason being that I wanted to make sure that the findings are based on the views of the respondents. A qualitative inquiry has been used to explore in detail parents’ experiences of their opportunities for involvement in the school, and the impact of these experiences on their own point of view or reasoning. This aim is congruent with qualitative research which is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants’ perspective (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993:373).

In using qualitative research the researcher wants to gain a deeper understanding of events, people and processes and therefore falls within the interpretative tradition. Qualitative research is seen as rich in detail, and also focuses on the feelings and thoughts of respondents and provides in-depth data. Schumacher & McMillan, (1993:373) state that the outcome of the research depends on the participants’ participation and the meaning they attach to events and processes.

3.3 RESEARCH ETHICS

3.3.1 Introduction

According to Babbie (2001:470), anyone who is involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreement about what is proper and improper in scientific research. Mouton (2001:238) says that the researcher should have knowledge of the ethics of research which concerns what is wrong and what is right in the conduct of research, because scientific research is a form of human conduct, and it follows that such conduct has to conform to accepted norms and values.

Mouton (2001:239) warns researchers about conflicts that may arise because of ethical issues that may emerge from the interaction between the researcher and people when there is conflict of interest. As a novice researcher I tried to gather information as to what should be done first when conducting a research. I therefore did the following in order to attend to various ethical aspects of research:
3.2 Letters for permission

In order to collect data from schools I had to complete a form to apply to the Education Department for permission to visit the schools. Application letters were also sent to the principals of the two selected schools and the Governing Bodies. Letters were also written to the Priests and Church Wardens of the different denominations to ask permission to be given a chance after the services on Sunday to interview parents.

Permission to conduct research in the two schools was obtained from the Department of Education Western Cape Province (Addendum A). The principals also allowed me to visit their schools and were enthusiastic about the whole research issue. They also confirmed that they had already received letters from the Director: Western Cape Education Department (Research) (Dr. R.S. Cornelissen).

The Church Wardens and Priest also responded positively, and only rescheduled the dates and times that I had requested to suit their church schedules. Some churches and Church Wardens asked for more information about my intended visit and I had to explain.

3.3.3 Avoidance of harm

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport (2005:57) say that “subjects can be harmed in a physical or emotional manner”. The above made me very sceptical as to whom to involve in the investigation. My respondents were made aware of the fact that they were not obligated to participate in the investigation and not forced to answer any questions that might be uncomfortable for them to answer. Even the letter from the Western Cape Department of Research (Dr. Cornelissen) stated categorically that the respondents were under no obligation to participate in the research for my study.

3.3.4 Informed consent

According to Babbie (2001:470) informed consent is called “voluntary participation”. Neuman (2000:124) confirms what is said by Babbie by adding that no one should be forced to participate in a research project, people must take part voluntarily. The participants were made aware of the fact that they were participating voluntarily and could withdraw at any time.

3.3.5 Confidentiality and anonymity

De Vos et al, (2005:61) define privacy as something that is not intended for others to observe or to analyse, and that it is the right of an individual to decide the time to reveal his/her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour to the public.

All educators, parents and learners were assured that the information obtained would be treated confidentially and only be used for the purposes of the study. I also assured them that no names would be included in the study.
3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

3.4.1 Introduction

In this section I focused on data gathering, data analyzing and data interpretation. Information for this study was acquired by using both secondary and primary sources and by using a mixed-method approach which included interviews and questionnaires. As I have mentioned before, the use of mixed-method approach (both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection) were used so as to limit any chances of making mistakes, (Lincoln & Guba) cited by Johnson & Christensen (2004:50). By using this mixed-method approach I minimized the chances of making the mistakes.

3.4.2 Secondary and primary sources

3.4.2.1 Secondary sources

Data collected from secondary sources refer to information that has been collected by someone other than the researcher for a different project to the one currently being undertaken. I have made use of various available publications such as textbooks, journals and previous studies on the subject. I have used recent publications as far as possible.

3.4.2.2 Primary sources

Data collected from primary sources refers to information that the researcher personally collects (participants/respondents completed questionnaires). I also used interviews to obtain information from the primary sources which in my case are parents, educators and learners.

3.4.3 Quantitative Research

Struwig & Stead (2001:4) describe quantitative research as a form of conclusive research which involves large representative samples and fairly structured data collection procedures. They further explain that this kind of research is more structured than qualitative research in that sampling, research design, questionnaires and statistical methods are largely determined prior to the participants completing questionnaires. Struwig & Stead state that “in contrast, qualitative researchers are generally more flexible in that methods may be devised as the research progresses and are not necessarily planned a priori”. This kind of flexibility can lead to the researcher being overwhelmed by data and lose focus of the aims of the study.

In this research questionnaires and/or some form of structured observation are used to measure constructs. Data were also portrayed as being objective, precise and reliable. The most common methods used to conduct quantitative research are exploratory, descriptive, experimental and quasi-experimental. Neuman (2000:510) explains exploratory research as one where the researcher wants to develop initial ideas and a more focused research question. Descriptive research attempts to describe something, e.g. the demographic characteristics of the users of a given product, the age of the users and their sex. The experimental research is used to test certain groups before and after the use of treatment. One group will be called the control group and the other one the
experimental group. The experimental group will be given treatment whilst the control group would not receive any treatment and thereafter the groups will be tested. I do not like using the quantitative research method because some people consider the data collected in this manner as superficial, in that they seldom provide a comprehensive or clear explanation of the issue being investigated. Not much of this research method has been used in my study because of its complications and strictness, e.g. the researcher-participant relationship. According to Struwig & Stead (2001:17) quantitative research stipulate that the relationship between the researcher and the participants must be minimal and contact must be short and brief. How can I work like that when I want to put myself in the shoes of the participants and know how they feel or act towards the experiences that they encounter? I believe in close contact with my participants so as to gain their trust, which is not allowed in quantitative research. I only used questionnaires after interviews with different groups in churches and meetings.

I felt very much at ease in using the qualitative research method because this kind of research is in contrast with the quantitative approach. In qualitative research there are no boundaries stipulated for the researcher and the participants. The researcher can contact the participants and discuss with them. The researcher can ask the participants to interpret the data or to comment on the researcher’s interpretation of the data. Struwig & Stead (2001:17) say that “it is assumed that the researcher’s values and biases are an integral part of the research process and cannot be ignored”.

Before taking a final decision as to which research approach to follow, I looked seriously at the ideas prescribed by Leedy cited by Struwig & Stead (2001:20) for guidelines for selecting a research approach. [see figure 3.1]

**Figure 3.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidelines for selecting a research approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use this approach if:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You believe that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your audience is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your research question is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The available literature is:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your research focus:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your time available is:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your ability/desire to work with people is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your desire for structure is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have skills in the area of:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your writing skills are strong in the area of:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After taking a thorough look at the above, I knew that I was going to follow the mixed-method approach but leaning more to the side of qualitative research. I also took into consideration Parasuraman’s (1991:254) statement that “all data are ‘soft’, and any mode of gathering data is a series of compromises and also, what is important in research is transforming data into information, insights and knowledge”.

3.4.4 Rationale for using a mixed-method approach

3.4.4.1 Introduction

It is not always easy for researchers to predetermine which research methods should be used. This was also the case in my study, because I had to investigate the problems that affect education all over the world.

Firstly I thought that I was going to use interviews only in my data collection, and then later I found out that using interviews only would not serve the purpose of my research as individual respondents might not always look at their own involvement objectively. I also had an idea that if I used the questionnaire immediately after the interviews, the data collected by using the questionnaire could serve as a valuable means to confirm the responses given in the interviews and thus ensure reliability (Le Compte & Preissle) cited by Wellington (2004:31).

Ultimately I decided to make use of the mixed-method approach because I wanted to use both interviews and questionnaire to make my case stronger. Creswell (2003:15) refers to the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods as mixed-methods approach.

3.4.4.2 The advantages of mixed-method approach to data collection

Johnson & Christensen (2004:49) view the use of multiple perspectives, theories, and research methods as strengths in educational research. They also view the quantitative and qualitative approaches as complementary to each other. A mixed-method approach can be used to capture the best of both qualitative and quantitative strategies. Creswell (2003:15) confirms that the mixed-method approach is a way of neutralizing the biasness in each method. Newman and Benz (1998:20) concur that the use of both interviews and questionnaire in the study ensures increased knowledge.

Johnson & Turner (2003:40), state that when reading or evaluating mixed research, one needs to consider the fundamental principle of mixed research, which states that it is wise to collect multiple sets of data using different research methods, in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination has complementary strengths and no overlapping weaknesses.

Lincoln & Guba, cited by Johnson & Christensen (2004:50), explain the idea of combining two research methods with different strengths and weaknesses in a research study to make sure that one will not make a mistake. They compare this theory to a fisherman who puts together all the fish nets with holes to form one good net without holes.
In my own study I found the advantages of the mixed-method approach as spelled out by the others above to be very relevant. I found out that shy people and reserved people could not talk in the open so questionnaires were good for them. As soon as the questionnaires were administered you could see that everybody was concentrating on completing his/her questionnaire, even those who never said a word in the whole discussions, that made me very happy to be able to include every single member of the church in discussing this crucial matter.

3.5 DATA GATHERING

3.5.1 Introduction

Data for the study was obtained from parents, educators and learners. In so doing I wanted to involve all the stakeholders at schools so as to get my facts correctly from all people involved at school. The purpose of the study was explained thoroughly to the participants, and I also made it clear to them that they should understand that participating in this study was not compulsory. I tried by all means to build trust with all the participants, because that was a crucial point so that people could speak openly and freely. I also assured them of anonymity because I wanted them to feel comfortable and free to share their experiences and opinions about the problem as stated by Anderson & Arsenault (2004:26).

In this process data was collected using different means of data collections e.g.:

- Interviews were conducted with parents, educators and learners to find out how they felt about the non-involvement of parents in the education, (interactive strategy, researcher interacts with participants), Le Compte & Preissle (1993:159)

- A focus group was chosen (consisting of 15 parents, 8 learners and 8 educators)

- A questionnaire was used to allow individual people to answer individually about how they perceived parental involvement in their schools.

- Non-interactive strategies such as document search (little or no interaction between researcher and participants, only written responses are made available to the researcher) Le Compte & Preissle (1993:159)

- Observation of the parents in school activities was done as well as a document search.

3.5.2 Sampling

Respondents or participants have been purposefully selected and used; I used parents, educators and learners in the township schools. Gay and Airasian (2000:209) point out that the qualitative researcher relies on purposive selection of their participants. These participants were selected to provide rich data concerning the research topic. According to Johnson & Christensen (2004:45) a qualitative researcher uses purposeful or judgment sampling, since sampling always aims at locating information-rich individuals, those who are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under investigation.
According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:378) “the power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in-depth yield many insights about the topic”.

Struwig and Stead (2001:57) confirm that a qualitative researcher focuses primarily on the depth or richness of the data and therefore qualitative researchers generally select samples purposefully rather than randomly. They also add that qualitative researchers must carefully consider why they have selected a particular sample and not another. The choice of participants for the study was therefore purposive which according to Lankshear & Knobel (2004:148), ‘…involves hand-picking respondents for a study … for the specific qualities they bring to the study’ Fifteen (15) parents were involved in this study i.e. some who are partially active in the school’s activities and some who are not. Some parents involved in the study were members of the governing bodies, since they are knowledgeable and have found their way in the governance of the school, and know their direction as far as the school’s activities are concerned. They were chosen because of their knowledge and awareness of the current situation of parental involvement in their respective schools. I approached them because I knew how they were struggling in trying to involve parents in activities of the school.

A certain degree of homogeneity has been maintained in the sampling by including only parents who were either parents of learners at one of the two high schools involved, or current members of governing bodies of the two schools. In order to get an academically balanced sample, parents who are illiterate and those who are literate have been included. Both females and males formed part of my sampling.

For the purpose of interviews I used simple random sampling, McMillan & Schumacher (2006:120), to select educators and learners in the one school. In the other school I decided to interview learners and educators who are themselves involved in the school activities like sports and fundraising committees. I decided to approach learners in the students’ representative councils (SRC), because of their position in the running of the school, and in the governing body of the school. Also the two members of the educators in the governing body of the school formed part of my sampling because of the knowledge that they possess about the parental involvement at school from the Governing Body’s side.

Constraints, such as the availability of appropriate participants, as well as costs of locating and enlisting the participants, played a role in the final composition of the respondents.

3.5.3 Collection of data and strategies used

3.5.3.1 Interviews

Dunne, Pryor & Yates (2005:27) say that interviewing means talking with people, is getting their views and their interpretation of the social context, social factors or social events. Inclusion of interviews in a research design is accompanied by the selection of interviewees (the people the researcher is going to speak to) from specific social groups; in this case the parents, educators and learners. The interviewer (the researcher) must take into consideration the number of people to be interviewed, the time and the space available. Filmer et al. cited by Dunne et al. (2005:29) specify the difficulties in framing
interview questions, and say the researcher must avoid using ambiguous questions. At the same time the researcher is advised to guard against exclusions or assumptions with respect to the respondents.

Mason (2002: 225) states that interviewing is based on the assumption that it is possible to investigate an issue by asking people to talk and to listen and interpret what they are saying. Gerson & Horowitz (2002:204) say that people can also come up with new and unexpected information, which has to be also accepted, but concentration must remain on the relevant information for the investigation. Interviews were conducted with parents, educators and learners. Interviews were done after school with learners and at homes with parents. I chose other parents who were also not the parent of learners interviewed, so as to get different views.

There are different types of interviews (Taylor and Bogdan (1998: 88) :

- Structured interviews, which require fixed, identically worded questions.
- In-depth interviewing, which refers to a qualitative research interviewing method, in which the interviewer uses various questions and probing to pursue issues thoroughly.

As a qualitative researcher, you have to be flexible. That means the researcher starts with a general idea and is constantly aware of the fact that the situation can force the researcher to change direction and change the approach (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998: 92). If the researcher is not aware of the kind of questions that he/she is formulating for the participants, the interviewer can change the course of the interview by supplying him or her with irrelevant information.

I did not use structured interviews. Instead I decided to use semi-structured interviews because they formed part of in-depth, face-to-face interviews (Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel (1998:319) which was very important in my study.

### 3.5.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

As stated by Schrunick, et al, (1998:319) semi-structured interviews form part of an in-depth face-to-face interview. I decided to conduct the semi-structured interviews after looking deeply at the themes and topics that emerged from the focus group interviews.

In avoiding making my participants bored, I used the semi-structured interviews strategically knowing that they can last for a longer period and can become intense and involved, depending on the topic (De Vos et al., 2005:297). I tried to make them feel at ease and comfortable by allowing them to pose questions to one another and dwell on their experiences of the non-involvement or involvement of parents in the education of their children.

### 3.5.3.3 Qualitative interviews

This study focused on qualitative interviews as described by among others, Rubin & Rubin cited by Mouton (2001:196), emphasising the culture of the interviewee, the active
participation of the interviewer and the importance of giving the interviewee voice. Johnson & Christensen (2004:183) state that if one uses qualitative interviews he/she must understand that these have open-ended questions and will provide qualitative data. Qualitative interviews can be used to collect in-depth information about a participant’s thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and feeling about an investigated topic. The researcher has to establish trust and understanding with the participants so as to get the hidden world of the participants and also the true information needed for the investigation.

Qualitative interviews are popular with qualitative researchers. Johnson & Christensen (2004:183) mention three types of qualitative interviews as follows:

- “The informal conversational interview: This kind of interview is described as a spontaneous, loosely-structured interview. It does not have interview protocol, so it is better if the interviewer uses a tape recorder to record important points of the interview.

- The interview guide approach: In this interview, the interviewer has a plan to explore specific topics and to ask specific open-ended questions from the interviewee. The interviewee here drafts the protocol beforehand. It is very important to be alert in this kind of interview so as to keep track of the interviewee when he/she goes off on a topic and gives information that is not relevant to the research purpose.

- The standardized open-ended interview: here the interviewer has a standardized interview protocol that is almost the same as the one in interview protocol. The difference is that the interview protocol in the quantitative interview includes primarily closed-ended items, and interview protocol in the standardized open-ended interview includes primarily open-ended items”.

I also used individual cultural interviews, which focus on the norms, values, understandings and the taken-for-granted actions or behaviour of illiterate parents and parents from the disadvantaged communities. According to Rubin & Rubin cited by Mouton (2001:197) cultural interviews are about learning how people see, understand, and interpret their world. I spent most of the time listening to people rather than posing detailed and focused questions. In so doing I gathered rich data from individuals speaking from their heart and feeling free and comfortable to share their own experiences with me. I was also fortunate as a researcher to have an idea of the kind of culture being practiced in the township as I, also grew up in the same settings as my respondents.

3.5.3.4 The advantages of making use of interviews

There are many reasons why researchers choose to use interviews. I have chosen to use interviews because of the following reasons mentioned by Wellington (2004:69), Johnson & Christensen (2004:184) and Taylor & Bogdan (1998:90):

- the researcher gets the true information directly from the reliable source
- the researcher gets the chance to meet the interviewee personally
- interviews also gives the researcher the chance to probe for more information
- the researcher receives the first-hand knowledge and develops trust between the interviewee and the interviewer
- interviews can reach the parts that other methods cannot reach
- interviews allow a researcher to investigate and prompt things that cannot be observed

3.5.3.5 The disadvantages of making use of interviews

Like any other tool that a researcher uses, interviews also have disadvantages. Wellington (2004:70), Taylor & Bogdan (1998:90) and Mouton (2001:106) mentioned the following as disadvantages of making use of the interviews:

- the researcher needs to limit the time used
- the techniques of interviews are unstructured and uncontrolled
- in certain cases if the interviewer knows the interviewee, the interviewee tends to shy away from answering questions
- the researcher can be very careful about upsetting the interviewee and in the process avoids asking crucial questions.

3.5.4 Focus group interviews

In this kind of interview a group interaction is used to generate data. Krueger, cited by Struwig and Stead (2001:99) explains a focus group as ‘a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment’.

Johnson & Christensen (2004:185) explain a focus group as “a type of group interview in which a moderator/researcher (person leading the focus group discussion) leads a discussion with a small group of individuals, in the case of this study the educators, learners and parents. This is done to examine, in detail, how the group members think and feel about a topic. It is called the “focus” group because the researcher keeps the individuals in the group focused on the topic being discussed”.

Stewart & Shamdasani cited by Johnson & Christensen (2004:185) mention the multiple purposes of using focus groups as follows:

- receiving general background information about a particular topic of interest from respondents
- generating research hypotheses that can be submitted to further research and testing using more quantitative approaches
- stimulating new ideas and creative concepts from respondents in answering the problem concerned
- diagnosing the potential for problems with a new program
- learning how participants talk about the phenomenon of interest (which may, in turn, facilitate the design of questionnaires, survey instruments, or other research tools that may be used later on)
- interpreting previously obtained quantitative results.
Johnson & Christensen (2004:185) suggest that a focus group can be composed of six to twelve respondents who are purposively selected because they can supply the researcher with the kind of information of interest to him/her. During this time I had already made up my mind that I was going to purposely select 15 parents six (6) of those who were actively involved in the school’s activities and nine (9) who were not active. I did this because there were in any case a few parents who were involved in school activities and I wanted those who were involved to influence those who were not involved, so that they could see the problem of non-involvement.

I chose 8 (eight) educators who were conveners of different extra-mural activities at the schools, e.g. sports, fundraising, cultural, entertainment, safety committees. This was done so as to find out the kinds of problems that they were experiencing in their different committees about parental involvement in these activities at the schools.

Ten (10) learners chosen included both boys and girls, some children of the parents mentioned above, and some children members of the SGB, and others who were involved in extra-mural activities at school. Both learners who participated in sport and those who were assisting in sports or extra-mural activities were selected, so as to get the real picture of what was happening about the parental involvement at these schools.

The aim of selecting this focus group was based on the assumption that I would obtain information from all stakeholders at school. Krueger & Casey (2000:7) view the purpose of focus group interviews as promoting self-disclosure between participants and to give the researcher the idea of what people think and feel about the topic.

This group was a homogeneous group (composed of similar kinds of people), not heterogeneous, so that the group could not form cliques and coalitions. When using this method of data gathering the researcher is advised to use more than one focus group, so as not to rely on a single focus group’s information. Focus group interviews were repeated until the information became saturated (Schurink et al, 1998:317).

During interviews I avoided using structured interviews because I did not want to lead the participants in a specific direction. Participants responded to open-ended questions as indicated by Schurink et al. (1998:314). I also intended to see themes, topics and patterns emerging from the interview transcripts and avoided simply trying to confirm my own ideas.

3.5.5 Questionnaires

The other instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. According to Macintyre (2000:74), “the questionnaire is a survey of different opinions from large numbers of people who provide anonymous replies”. Mc Kernan (1996:126) agrees with Mcintyre, and adds that questionnaire contains “factual items” that collect data about the case.

Questionnaire is the best tool to get people to ‘open up’, because some people are shy by nature to speak to anyone, but when completing a questionnaire they feel free and the researcher gets a true response from individuals.
According to Dunne, et al. (2005:43), the use of questionnaires as a source of data collection in social research is seen as:

- time and cost effective as they provide the potential to include as many respondents as would be possible through interviews
- it is regarded as more efficient for the identification of underlying patterns.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison, cited by Dunne, et al. (2005:43), state that using a questionnaire as a good tool for data collection depends on:

- the drafts of the questionnaire, preparation and production.
- the accessibility of the questionnaire to the respondents
- the demand that the questions should be easily understood and followed (language used).

Johnson & Christensen (2004:166) advise researchers to make use a good strategy in writing a questionnaire, to try and develop an empathetic understanding, or an ability to think like the potential research participants. If the researcher can effectively consider how the research participants will interpret and react to each item on the questionnaire, then it will provide useful information. The questionnaire I used was divided into three sections because I wanted the study to answer the three main research questions. It was also clear that one section could not have achieved my goal. I used my literature study as basis for the content of the questionnaire.

In drafting the questionnaire, I made sure that the first question about the causes of non-involvement of parents would be answered by all the stakeholders - parents, educators and learners (Addendum D, E, F and G). One questionnaire would be for parents and educators only. I purposefully included the questions because this open format forces the respondents to think of answers without having a list of “acceptable” options from which to choose as stated by Anderson et al. (2004:173). I also made use of open-ended questions, deliberately to encourage respondents to give their opinions, describe their experiences and provide insights.

Questionnaires were distributed to each member in the meetings and respondents were given the opportunity to complete them. Assistance was provided to parents who were struggling to read, and write. Pens and pencils were available for everyone willing to participate. The language issue of the questionnaire was taken into account to suit all the participants. Dunne, et al. (2005:44); Johnson & Christensen (2004:167) say that language used in the questionnaires must be familiar to the respondents. That is why most of the questionnaires were written in Xhosa which is the language of most respondents at churches that were involved in the study. Only a few English questionnaires were required by respondents.

3.5.5.1 Rationale for using a questionnaire

Creswell (2003:153) mentions a threefold reason for making use of the questionnaire, namely:

- To determine to what extent conditions which are causing non-parental involvement at school were already present at these two schools.
➢ To determine whether there was a correlation between the data collected in the interviews and focus-group discussions on the one hand, and that collected in the questionnaire, on the other hand.

➢ To serve as a tool to determine the development needs of the school so as to be able to make use of the data collected for future planning and for the school development plan.

3.5.5.2 Advantages of using a questionnaire

Creswell (2003:154) states above that the use of a questionnaire can be seen as a strategy to determine whether there is a correlation between the qualitative data collected in the interviews and the data collected through the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire:

➢ serves as a means to generalize the research findings to a larger population

➢ ensures confidentiality/anonymity; and

➢ ensures that all respondents are exposed to exactly the same statements.

I wanted to make sure of the three above points, so questionnaires were my only option at that moment.

3.5.5.3 Administering the questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered after the interviews to both the parents and the educators. Creswell (2003:155) refers to this kind of survey as cross-sectional which means that the data was collected at one specific point in time and not over a period of time. The parents were asked to complete the questionnaire in different churches after the service and in school meetings. The educators were asked to complete the questionnaire after the interviews which were held after school. The questionnaire did not take a long time to be completed.

3.5.6 Factors that influenced the study

3.5.6.1 Reliability

McMillan & Schumacher (1993:168) state that reliability means that the measurement is consistent each and every time it is done the results are the same. The issue of reliability is relevant in this study because of the use of the questionnaire. The question to be asked in terms of reliability is how similar will the results of the instrument be if used on other occasions. The answer may be, they might be the same or similar.

3.5.6.2 Validity

Validity refers to trustworthiness or credibility. The questionnaire used was intended to measure the extent to which parental involvement is already present in the schools. According to MacMillan & Schumacher (1993:167) the case of validity refers to the extent to which inferences made from the questionnaire are appropriate and meaningful to the study.
Validity needs to be considered in qualitative research. It is more difficult to address validity concerns than it is in quantitative research; Winter cited by Struwig & Stead (2001:143) in his report says that “there are no widely accepted guidelines for testing validity in qualitative research”. The issue of validity with regard to qualitative research has been an issue for years and will remain a contentious issue for years to come. Struwig & Stead (2001:143) compiled a list of criteria from the works of authors (Maxwell: 1992; Miles & Huberman: 1994; Patton: 1990 and Winter: 2000) that can influence the validity of qualitative research. These criteria relate to issues such as descriptive validity, interpretative validity, theoretical validity, triangulation, researcher effects and generalisability or applicability.

3.5.6.2.1 Descriptive validity

Struwig & Stead (2001:144) state that “descriptive validity refers to whether the information provided is factually accurate and comprehensive or whether it has been partly omitted or distorted”. As it is mostly the case with researchers to omit or distort the information collected from the participants. In order to guard against descriptive validity I had to ask the assistance of the participants and an educator from school in examining the accuracy of the data collected. In some instances we disagreed on the interpretation of the data, and then we had to reach an agreement.

3.5.6.2.2 Interpretative validity

According to Struwig & Stead (2001:144) interpretative validity is indicative of whether the participants’ meanings or perspectives, e.g. of events or behaviours, are accurately reported. The emphasis in this must be placed on the perspectives and language of the participants, rather than on the interpretations and terminology of the researcher. As a researcher in this case I used easy language and my advantage was that I could speak the language of the participants, and I refrained from using complicated terminology in the research.

3.5.6.2.3 Theoretical validity

Struwig & Stead (2001:144) explain the term theoretical validity as a term that refers to whether there is a common agreement between the researcher and the participants about the concepts or theory used to refer to the phenomena that have been described. Maxwell cited Struwig & Stead (2001:144) states that, “theoretical validity … is concerned with problems that do not disappear with agreement on the ‘facts’ of situation, the issue is the legitimacy of the application of a given concept or theory to established facts”. It is therefore very important to discuss the interpretation of the data with the participants in terms of the concepts used and the theory developed from the data. I did that by using the direct words of the participants in written feedback to ensure authenticity of the data. Oral feedback from the researcher to the participants was done to make sure that there was an understanding of their viewpoints.

Winter cited by Struwig and Stead (2001:144) says that he has an opposing view that questions the assumption that findings are only useful if the participants concur with them. The question that is asked is “what if the participants have a vested interest in providing certain viewpoints? In this case, are you as a researcher expected to accept
their perspectives or their alteration of your interpretation? It is clear that validity in qualitative research has an equivocal status that needs to be conceptualized to overcome the impasse regarding the debate on its nature and usefulness.”

3.5.6.2.4 Triangulation

Newman & Benz (1998:200) say triangulation refers to combining two or more data collection techniques or methods in one design. Struwig & Stead (2001:145) say that various methods can be used to analyse the data, such as observation, quantitative measures, interviews, or documents. I did this by using interviews, focus-group discussion, observations and questionnaires as data collection methods. This confirmed the credibility of the data, and the different techniques guided similar results.

3.5.6.2.5 Researcher effects

This term refers to the degree to which you as a researcher are biased in reporting and interpreting the findings of your study, Struwig & Stead (2001:145). I knew that I had to explain my background to the participants and also make them aware why I was doing this study of parental involvement in the education of their children. I knew that they might be shy to give the correct information to me, so I made it clear that I wanted them to be involved in their children’s education and help teachers in their plight to educate children. I also mentioned that I was there as a researcher not as an educator, since most of them knew me as an educator. I deliberately chose one school where I was working and the other one where I was not involved as a teacher. Our schools are not close to each other, but most educators and parents know each other. The information I received from both educators and parents was honest because we have known each other for some time.

3.5.6.2.6 Generalisability or applicability

Maxwell and Patton cited by Struwig & Stead (2001:145), say “generalisability or applicability refers to the degree to which the data can be generalized within a group (similar to internal validity) or to other groups (similar to external validity).

Fien and Hillcoat cited by McFarlane (2000:28) say that the research can be seen as “situation specific”, which implies that the findings will only apply to the school in which the research was done - in my case the two township high schools in George. Fien and Hillcoat cited by McFarlane (2000:28), argue that although the findings will apply to the identified school, they could be relevant to schools in similar settings, which implies that the results can to a certain extent be transferred to other similar settings.

3.5.7 Observation

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004:186) observation is the watching of behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest. Observations were done almost every time when there was a meeting and during the activities at school, looking at the parents’ attendance and their involvement at the school’s activities.
For me as a researcher in this study, I can say that observing the way things were happening at school for many years, led to the decision to investigate this in my study. As I was watching the manner in which the parents participated in the education of their children for over a period of 10 – 15 years, I felt an urge to ask parents individually why they were not supporting their children in their school’s activities.

When this study started I had ample time to observe most of the parents, and knew exactly how their behaviours and attitudes were towards school activities. I could not believe when some parents in interviews answered that they were supporting their children. I then decided to be unobtrusive so as not to affect what was being observed. LaPiere, cited by Johnson and Christensen (2004:186), says that the people’s attitudes and behaviours are not always congruent. I realized the truth about that when I was collecting data using observation to confirm the fact that people do not always do what they say. In my case I was fortunate enough because I was mostly present during meetings, school functions and sports activities so I could easily understand if answers given did not truly reflect what was really happening at school.

3.5.8 Meetings with different stakeholders in schools

3.5.8.1 Introduction

Meetings with parents at schools were arranged early in March 2007, but most of them failed as usual. The principal and the educators were not surprised because that was the usual reaction of the parents when they were called to a meeting at school. As Newman and Benz (1998:17) say each research decision depends on the previous action or step taken. I knew that I had to devise a means to get hold of parents since the meetings at schools were not well attended.

My second attempt was during the second term in April 2007. I decided to write letters to parents of certain classes and in different grades. The second plan worked because quite a number were available but not to my satisfaction. I told them about my intentions and ask if they would assist me in getting the other parents. The answer was not promising because they told me that parents do not attend meetings and the principal agreed that the people available on that day were the usual people attending meetings. The meeting started with the number that was available because compared to the first meetings at least I had more than fifty (50) parents from five (5) classes which had a maximum of 40 – 45 learners in each class. The principal and the educators who were assisting me were even surprised about the number of parents available at that particular meeting and wanted to know how I did it.

Though I was happy and surprised, I was not satisfied and I knew that I had to devise other means to get hold of a larger number of parents. On that day I went home frustrated, not knowing what to do, and time was against me to start collecting data. I decided I should visit churches where most parents gathered on Sundays and Saturdays. I wrote letters to the Priests and Church Wardens of the different denominations, and the response was positive. I re-arranged my schedule to suite their schedule. Quite a large number were available at churches, and the process of data gathering started.
3.5.8.2 Information from parents in churches

The first meeting took place on the 17th April 2007 at one of the township churches, and the second on the 22nd April 2007 in the other church. At the beginning I thought of starting with the data gathering from the church where I was a member, but I changed my mind thinking that it would not help me because the members of my church might be biased in giving the information needed. I then decided to go to a church that I did not belong to, and that helped me a lot because I came there as a stranger. While some members of the church knew that I was a teacher, they were curious as to why I was there on this particular day. Some thought that I had come to make an announcement from school and they were surprised about the research and everyone wanted to be part of it.

At the churches I thought that I was going to address only a certain number, but the congregation and the Priests asked me to address the whole congregation. I did not have a problem with that because I knew that I would be getting a chance of choosing my focus-group interview participants and people to fill in the questionnaires. The statement by Struwig & Stead (2001:17) that as a qualitative researcher I had to be flexible and allow the participants to change my methods of data gathering, but be aware of the aim of the research and not become overwhelmed by the data, became evident to me.

During the session I had asked a person to video record the whole session and I remembered that Holstein & Gulbruim, cited by De Vos et al. (2005:298), stating that permission to record participants should be asked in advance from them, so I did that before the photographer made the video tape, and I explained why I had to do it. I did that only once in one of the churches because video recording was expensive. In some instances I used a tape recorder which worked out cheaper than the video tape. Mc Kernan (1996:106) believes that recording gives the researcher an accurate account of verbal behaviour. Making use of the video recorder gave me the opportunity to focus on the non-verbal responses of the participants and, furthermore, provided the opportunity to focus on the feelings and thoughts of the respondents.

Initially parents did not understand what I meant by parental involvement in the education of their children. According to them they were involved because they were paying school fees and buying school stationery and school uniforms. I had to explain to them what it means to be involved in the education of a child and to take part in the school activities as explained by the two authors, Botha, et al. (2003:209) and Squelch (1994:52) in (2.3). They realized that they were guilty and had not understood the concept of parental involvement as a whole.

Parents spoke freely about the causes of non-involvement and also mentioned that they had not understood the importance of being involved. As people were speaking, I gathered information from what they were saying, not forgetting what Gerson and Horowitz (2002:204) had said about gathering relevant information and also allowing space to discover the unexpected. The atmosphere at the churches was conducive because people spoke calmly, knowing that they were at church. Later, after the discussions, I divided the members into three groups and assigned each group with a task. The three research questions were given to the different groups to discuss and come up with answers. After the group discussions we again came together to discuss the answers from the different groups. It was amazing how parents participated in the whole discussion. The parents wanted some decisions taken at the meetings to be implemented at schools
immediately. I had to interfere and tell them that this was still an investigation. Some of them did not clearly understand what an investigation was, but insisted that I should come back to carry on with the ideas, and that they would be looking for more ways to be involved in school activities. Most parents agreed that the problem lies with them and since they now understand the problems in schools they can work out solutions themselves. They agreed that they don’t need someone from somewhere to fix their problems; they themselves are going to come up with solutions that will fit them.

After the interviews, questionnaires were completed by the members in church. Everybody wanted a questionnaire, and again I had to explain that not everyone had to complete the form. They again wanted to know why. I told them that I did not have enough for all. During the completion of questionnaires I walked around and spoke to individuals. I asked them if they would allow me to interview them individually after the session and also selected my focus-groups of parents.

3.5.8.3 Information from educators

The meeting with educators was on the 16th May 2007. This day was specifically chosen because most educators were not committed to any extra-mural activities on Mondays. It is always difficult to get educators together for any meeting besides a school meeting. Educators are very busy. They have workshops to attend and cluster meetings (where they come together as educators from different schools and discuss how they are teaching the same subject in their different schools, and also discuss challenges that they come across in their curriculum). This particular gathering was postponed twice, but eventually we met. At the beginning I thought I was going to address only the principal, the deputies and the SMT, but the principal told me that the educators were also interested because the topic was affected them also. I did not have a problem with that because I was used to a change of plan as was the case with other meetings.

A lengthy discussion took place, educators showing their dissatisfaction about parents who dump children at school and never come back to see how they are doing. One teacher made a comment that “the only time they think about school is when they have to collect their children’s progress reports. It’s even worse now because they don’t pay school fees”. The educator explained that it had been better before because they had come to school to register their children and pay school fees. You could see and sense that this issue was really troubling the educators. Everybody wanted to speak and voice their dissatisfaction. Unfortunately we did not have enough time. I had to intervene and try to direct the session to my three main questions - the causes, the consequences and the solution of the problems of the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children.

Seeing that everyone wanted to speak, I divided the educators into three groups. Each group was composed of twelve (12) members and I gave each group one question from the three to discuss and come up with their answers to the rest of the group. Using this idea gave me the chance to move around and listen to the educators as they were trying to find the causes, the consequences and the solution to the main problem of parental involvement at school. Listening to them speaking one could hear that they were really frustrated. As I was moving around, I could not help overhearing one educator saying that parents don’t care about their children, the school and the education since they
themselves were not educated. I was also able to write down the themes as they emerged from the different groups.

After the separate discussions they had to come back and report to the rest of the group. The first group to report back was the one for causes of non-involvement. In this group they were blaming the parents, government and the department of education more than looking for possible causes. They said that:

- parents don’t care about their children and the schools
- parents are not interested in education
- parents allow young children to stay alone
- parents are concerned only about their work; they don’t check the learners’ school work
- parents don’t know how to prioritize their children’s programme
- the department of education is overloading educators
- the department of education expects educators to play more roles at schools
- the government expect educators to do miracles, be parents, nurses, police, social workers
- the government has allowed too many rights for the children.

The second group was the one with the consequences; this group was also blaming the parents and saying that were the ones who would suffer the consequences with their children. They said that:

- children are failing in numbers
- children are not attending school
- children are dropping out of school/some become pregnant
- violence and crime is escalating at school
- disciplinary problems are getting out of hand
- peer pressure, because a child does not have any one to turn to
- there is a gap between them and the parents
- there is nowhere or no one to report the children’s problems to
- the school is not developing as an organisation

The third group had to try and work out the solution to the problems. This particular group came out strongly, with most suggestions contradicting the School’s Act, and difficult to implement. They pointed out that:

- children whose parents are not active at school must be expelled
- parents must be forced to take part in school activities
- parents who do not attend meetings must be fined
- problematic learners have to be sent to a ‘house of safety’/‘place of safety’
- a policeman and a social worker should be appointed for each school
- firm policies to be drawn for discipline of learners
- training for parents to be involved in school activities
- all the members of the SMT must be involved first and be an example to others
- the government must train a separate group of educators to work with children
After a thorough discussion, all members were asked to add more to the points given by the other groups. Most educators felt that the points discussed should be implemented as soon as possible. I had to intervene and tell them that this was just an investigation for my study; it did not form part of the school rules and policies. I promised them that after the study I would come back to the schools with findings and solutions to their problems.

The questionnaires were given to educators to complete and also to add some suggestions to different questions on the questionnaire. This worked out well with the educators compared to the parents since they were familiar with the answering of questions and questionnaires. The questionnaires also gave an opportunity to the educators who were shy to speak or too reserved to say anything. All of them had to complete a questionnaire. While they were completing the questionnaires I asked for certain members from the staff who were involved in sports, cultural and entertainment committees to form my focus-group interviews (see 3.5.3). They were willing because during the joint discussions they were the ones who had a lot to say about how they were struggling to involve parents in the school’s activities. Ultimately I had a chance of having face-to-face interviews with the principal, the two deputies, two members from the SMT (Staff Management Team) and three educators. Thereafter I had to go to my focus-group interviews. After these interviews I could see that there was nothing being done by the school to try and involve parents. Everyone wanted parents to be involved but no effort was being made to invite them to come to school.

### 3.5.8.4 Information from the learners

Getting hold of learners was not a problem. I had arranged to meet them on the 18th May 2007, on the Thursday, because like educators on a Monday they were also not committed to sports on Thursdays. I had a group of learners from both schools. I did that on purpose because I wanted to see the similarities in their problems in trying to involve parents in their education and schools’ activities. The idea did work because all learners were staying in the same community but attending different schools.

Initially I was sceptical about mixing the two groups because learners have a tendency not to speak in front of others or in front of strangers. In this case they had no problem; in fact it was almost like a debate between two schools. Boys were freer than girls as usual, but when it comes to arguments girls come out on top. At the beginning both groups, like the parents, did not know what I meant about the parental involvement in their education. Taking into account their level of understanding I had to explain to them in simple terms, avoiding the use of difficult words, what “parental involvement” meant. Once they understood the meaning of the topic they deliberated enthusiastically that I found it difficult to stop them. But as time was against me I had to stop them and also explained to them about my three main questions.

Children are so used to working in groups that they decided to divide themselves even before I suggested it. I only had to make sure that they were not fighting or forming cliques, i.e. avoiding those children from the same school to be in one group. I had to spread them evenly in their different groups and also tried to avoid having one group with lots of boys or girls. Since they had knowledge about group work they elected their own scribes and a reporter. With children I changed my strategy, giving each group the three research questions. They had to discuss each question, i.e. the causes, the consequences and the solution in each group, not one group discussing one question. In so doing I
wanted to look at different focus-groups so that I could get different opinions from different people. As stated in paragraph (3.5.3) when dealing with focus-groups, one needs not to focus on one group’s findings. As I had expected, children came up with lots of unexpected information. As one group in their report said “educators must be parents to learners who do not have parents”. A lot of vital information came from the groups; I shall mention only a few:

- educators must be sensitive to the learners’ problems
- educators must understand that learners come from different backgrounds
- educators must know their learners’ backgrounds
- parents and educators must work together for the future of the children
- parents and educators must set examples for the children
- parents can be asked to assist in extra-mural activities at school
- the school must be of assistance to illiterate parents
- schools must plan functions that force parents to be involved
- Groups that involve learners, educators and parents in educating parents how to be involved must be formed.

Learners, like their parents, wanted to know what they could do first to involve parents in their education in different schools. I again had to explain to them the aim of the investigation, and also that they could not implement the decisions taken at the discussions, because they were not for their schools.
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.6.1 Introduction

Data analysis was done manually by looking for categories of responses emerging from data. I did not use electronic form or computer software for the analyses. According to Mills (2003: 104) data analysis is an attempt by the researcher to summarise the data in a dependable, accurate, reliable and correct manner.” I decided to organize and examine recorded data repeatedly with the aim of ultimately making general statements for the report that will be undisputed. The framework for reporting my findings was built after finding major relationships (patterns) from the recorded data (MacMillan & Schumacher 2006:380).

The data will be analysed using the approach of Rubin and Rubin (1995:227), which describes data analysis as follows: “Data analysis begins while the interviews are still underway. This preliminary analysis tells you how to redesign your questions to focus in on central themes as you continue interviewing”.

After the interviews were completed, I began a more detailed and fine-grained analysis of what my conversational partners told me. In this formal analysis, I discovered additional themes and concepts and built towards an overall explanation of the problem concerned. To begin the final analysis, I put into one category all the material from all my interviews that speak to one theme or concept. I also as stated in (Mouton 2001:198), compared material within the categories to look for variations and nuances in meanings, and compare across the categories to discover connections between themes. My goal was to integrate the themes and concepts into a theory that offers an accurate, detailed, yet subtle interpretation of my research study.

According to Struwig & Stead (2001:44) research is comprised of the collection and analysis of:

- information needed to solve a particular problem
- information to assist in the interpretation of a problem
- information needed to confirm or refute a specific hypothesis.

Struwig & Stead (2001:44) also state that a researcher should specify the research methodology that he/she is going to use and the scientific method he/she will use to gather and analyse information in order to arrive at a solution to the problem. It should also be indicated how the data will be analysed.

According to Delamont (2002:171) data analysis in qualitative research is the process during which the researcher formally identifies themes as they are suggested by the data and endeavours are made to demonstrate support for those themes. Patton (2002:432) states, “qualitative analysis transforms data into findings, which 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 reveals”.
Analysing data in qualitative research is less discreet than that found in quantitative research. Bryman & Burgess (1994:217) say that data gathering and data analysis can occur simultaneously, but for the sake of this study the data analysis and data gathering will be done separately. The large amount of data gathered for this study needs to be analysed, streamlined, organized and meaning must be brought to the data. Bryman & Burgess (1994:220) states that before the researcher attempts to analyse the data, he/she must make sure that all the field notes, interview transcripts, and documents are available. The researcher must also make sure that no data is missing. Patton cited by Struwig & Stead (2001:69) specified that the interview transcript must not be rephrased to be grammatically correct and the raw data must not be summarized, because it will no longer be the original data.

According to Mill (2003:104) “data analysis consists of the three concurrent flows of activity” namely, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing.

- Data reduction means selecting, simplifying and transforming data.
- Data display is the organized assembly of information.
- Conclusion drawing has to do with carefully searching for patterns and explanations and constructing a conclusion based on the data gathered. Conclusion drawing and recommendations comprises the last chapter of this treatise.

The analysis will be complete when I feel that I can share with others what my interpretation means for policymaking, for theory, and for understanding the social and political world that we live in. Wolcott cited by Mills (2003:104), describes data analysis as “the presentation of the findings of the study in a manner that has an air of undeniability”.

Firstly I will present my data analysis in a quantitative summary of the data gathered through the use of questionnaire and then secondly, I will go on to a discussion of the qualitative data gathered. Lastly I will come to the conclusion and the recommendation of the study and the findings.

### 3.6.2 Quantitative summary

Although initially I had no intention of using quantitative research methods (using questionnaires), as I was completing my literature review it become clear to me that I needed to get a feel of what the ‘situation’ was ‘out there’. I had no other alternative but to use questionnaires. After having administered and analyzed the questionnaires, I found that it helped refine my questions for the different interviews and focus-group interviews.

The tables below represent a quantitative summary of the responses various/different groups of participants on the questions given to them to answer in the questionnaires:
Table 1.1
Parents views about causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children (n = 50). In the table below I have summarized the evidence that show how parents felt about their non-involvement. I have taken all those who “strongly agree”, “agree”, “strongly disagree” and “disagree” and counted their numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools climate not friendly to parents</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents are not empowered to be involved (Don’t know how to be involved)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents are not invited to participate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents are not too illiterate to understand school things</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents don’t have time, too busy (work)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents don’t care for their children’s education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Parents do not come to meetings because they don’t receive notices about the meetings</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parents are losing control of their children</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1.2

Educators’ views about causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children (n=30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools climate not friendly to parents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents are not empowered to be involved (Don’t know how to be involved)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents are not invited to participate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents are not too illiterate to understand school things</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents don’t have time, too busy (work)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents don’t care about their children’s education</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Parents do not come to meetings because they don’t receive notices about the meetings</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parents are losing control of their children</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.3

Learners’ views about causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children (n = 40).
Learners were a bit confused about the questions in this questionnaire. I knew that they would not be able to answer some questions but I gave it to them anyway because I knew that with children sometimes you can get the truth that you won’t get from the adults. In most cases children would answer some questions from their heart and own understanding not for the purpose of the study but for themselves. Children have a tendency to give a true reflection of things because in most cases they won’t tell lies deliberately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools climate not friendly to parents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents are not empowered to be involved (Don’t know how to be involved)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents are not invited to participate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents are not too illiterate to understand school things</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parents don’t have time, too busy (work)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents don’t care about their children’s education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Parents do not come to meetings because they don’t receive notices about the meetings</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parents are losing control of their children</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents and educators were given the second questionnaire to complete. It was a straightforward questionnaire just to prove them wrong or right about the answers they had given in the first questionnaires (the answers above). Answers in that questionnaire were given in the form of YES, NO, OR SOMETIMES, (See Addendum F).

Table 2.1

Educators’ views about their efforts to involve parents in the education of their children and also about their views of parental involvement in their schools’ activities (n=30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are parents asked to assist in extra-mural activities at school?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are parents asked to support the school financially or do fundraising for the school?</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the school make sure that parents are welcomed when they visit the school?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is there anything done to help illiterate parents at school?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do the parents have an idea of the school policies and understand the part that they have to play as parents at school?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is there enough communication between educators and parents?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Are parents asked to assist in classroom or visit classrooms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2

Parent’s views about their own involvement in the education of their children (n = 50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you as a parent assist in extra-mural activities at school?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you support the school financially or do fundraising for the school?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the school make sure that you are welcomed when you visit the school?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is there anything done to help illiterate parents at school?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you as a parent have an idea of the school policies and understand the part that you have to play as a parent at school?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is there enough communication between educators and parents?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Are you as a parent asked to assist in classroom or visit classrooms?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables above will be further analysed in the qualitative data analysis, as they clearly showed the imbalances in the answers given by all the stakeholders.
3.6.3 Qualitative data analysis

3.6.3.1 Introduction

Analysing data was not easy especially because of the amount of data collected. I had to sift it and find all the relevant data for my study. I tried my best to summarise the data according to Mills (2003:104) in a dependable, accurate, reliable and correct manner. This I did using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

In the qualitative analysis I divided the data according to my three research questions, namely:

- Cause of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children
- Consequences of non-involvement of parents
- Solutions to the non-involvement of parents

3.6.3.2 Causes of non-involvement of parents as indicated by parents, educators and learners.

3.6.3.2.1 School climate

Most parents complained that the school climate is not free and accommodative to parents. Parents said that they always felt nervous around educators and around the school. Of the 40 parents questioned on whether the school climate was friendly towards parents, the majority (35 out of 40) said they strongly agree that it was not friendly. The number on its own shows how parents feel about visiting schools. During the interview on the question as to why they did not visit schools, one parent answered “The gates are always locked. It looks like a prison not a school, and when you are inside, you must wait for a long time to see the person that you want to see. I am never going back there”. Some parents added that, “it’s worse if you are not educated. It makes you feel even more stupid to sit there as people go past you, doing their daily work, some greeting and some not even noticing that there is someone sitting there”.

Educators on the other side feel that the school climate is friendly towards parents. Of the 30 educators questioned on this matter, the majority (25 out of 30) said they strongly disagreed that the school climate is unfriendly to parents. The answer here proves that the educators did not understand the parents’ problems. During the interviews a particular educator from one of the schools said, “Parents come to school at any time and they expect you to leave everything and attend them. It’s high time they learn to make appointments so that we can fit them into our busy schedule”. This treatment on its own shows that if you are acquainted with a particular surrounding, you will always think that the other people who do not stay or work in the same place will feel the same as you do and also act the same as you do. If people do not know the procedures of a certain organization they must be told in a respectful manner so that they can understand the organization and the people working in it.

Learners, as I have mentioned above, did not quite understand this question about the school climate because to them school was just a normal place where they spend most of
their daily hours. To them there was no issue about friendly or not being friendly. Of the 40 learners questioned about the school climate being friendly to their parents, 20 out of 40 said they strongly disagree, 5 said they disagree and 15 said they agree. During the interviews some learners thought that their parents were actually involved in school because they were paying their school fees, buying them stationery and school uniform. It was only after I had explained to them what parental involvement meant that they realized that their parents were not involved. After they understood they come up with lots of solutions for the problem. One learner even commented and said, “I wonder if the parents know what is expected of them by the school”. The child was right because really parents did not know that the school needs them so desperately.

3.6.3.2.2 Parents are not empowered (Do not know what to do)

Parents do not know what to do at schools. Even if they were involved they would not know what to do to help. Most parents claim that if they were empowered about the schools’ activities they would help. Of the 40 parents questioned about whether they were empowered to assist in schools, 44 out of 50 said they strongly disagreed and 15 said they agreed. The majority of parents’ shows that they would not be relaxed working with educators. Moreover, some people do not want to appear stupid in front of others. Parents were totally against the idea that they have to do educator’s work and they felt that they were not trained for it. One parent said in the meeting “what do they (educators) get paid for, if we must take over their duties”. Parents did not know anything about “empowerment”; in educational issues. The only empowerment they understood was to be empowered to understand politics.

One parent came up with a totally different opinion as to why they are not involved in the school’s activities. She said, “I am ashamed of coming to school because of my child’s behaviour at school. Whenever I come to school to discuss the issues pertaining to discipline, even if I receive a letter that invites me to come to school, I always have the idea that my child has transgressed again”. Another parent added that he would love to assist at school but because of the different behaviour of learners at school he would not be able to control himself like the educators did, because they were trained to work with naughty children.

Educators understood that parents in these small towns like ours (George) were not empowered to take part in school activities. Most educators in these schools come from other provinces where most people are educated. The educators saw that parents were not involved and took it for granted that they did not want to be involved. Of the 30 educators questioned about parental empowerment, 12 out of 30 answered that they strongly agree that parents are not empowered, 16 answered that they agreed that parents are not empowered, and 2 answered that they disagreed that parents need to be empowered. Listening to what they said during the interviews it was clear that they did not know that they were supposed to empower the parents to be involved in school activities. One educator said, “parents don’t know what to do, even those serving on the school governing bodies”.

Learners again answered this question doubtfully. They were not sure what ‘empowerment’ was. The only thing that came into their minds was that their parents were uneducated and saying that their parents were not teachers or lawyers. During the
focus-group discussions I had to explain to them that empowerment does not actually need so much education. It does need a person to be educated but even uneducated people can be empowered to do things for themselves and not depend on educated people. In this case parents could help educators to educate them (children) for a brighter future. All learners interviewed were of the opinion that their parents knew lots of things that they could do at school. In most cases I observed that learners saw me as an educator and they were answering most questions by defending their parents against me. I had to remind them time and again that they must see me as an investigator not an educator attacking their parents. The learners continued to say that educators must know the background of their learners so that learners can be treated fairly (Davies 1988 & Le Roux 1994), (2.5.8). Learners also emphasized the fact that children appear at schools daily with issues and problems that come from their homes and community environment. Many educators fail to understand these issues, and in most cases educators respond in ways that increase alienation and stress for children. In the end the results of being alienated are that learners decide to leave school and become the statistics of drop-outs. Of the 40 learners questioned about whether parents are empowered about things at school, 18 out of 40 said they strongly agreed that parents need to be empowered, 12 said they agreed and 10 said they disagreed.

3.6.3.2.3 Parents are not invited to participate in school activities

Mills and Gale (2004:274) agree with the point that parents, like anybody else, expect to be invited to come to school. They felt very strongly about the fact that the only time they are called to school is when there is a meeting. One parent said in the meeting, “If we are invited, we know that there is money to be asked from us and that is all”. The other parent added “or you are called to come to school when your child has misbehaved, or when your child is sick. Educators these day are so selfish they don’t even take a child to the clinic or give the child pain tablets! They call you (the parent) from work for a child who’s got a headache”. They also mentioned that they go to only school to fetch their children’s progress reports; otherwise they would not go there voluntarily. Parents felt that if they went to school uninvited they would be seen as intruders in the private area of the educators and the government. One frustrated parent said: “That place belongs to the educated people only. Luckily my child falls under that category”.

Listening to parents talking about the school as part of the community, made me dig deeper about their conception of the school as a place for educated people. The majority felt that they were not needed at school so they would stay as far away as possible. Of the 50 parents questioned, 30 out of 50 answered that they strongly agreed that they were not invited to participate in school’s activities by the educators and 15 said they agreed. Only 2 strongly disagreed and 3 disagree.

Educators did not agree with what the parents said. They were totally confused about the idea that they were expected to invite parents to participate in the school’s activities. According to them (educators) parents are supposed to know that they are part of the school because the school belongs to the community. One educator made a joke about the issue of inviting parents, saying that “guys we need to write letters to parents and invite them to come and help us at school”. I did not like the joke at all but because I was an investigator in this case I had to laugh like the others. In further discussions I knew that I was going to call that educator to have order. As I was addressing them I told them
that there were so many things that we as educated people took for granted. Uneducated people often have completely different views.

Learners felt that their parents were not invited to school activities. All children feel the need for their parents to come closer to educators. Children are sometimes shy about their parents, so they will try by all means to discourage them from coming to school. Only the young children like to see their parents working with educators. It was clearer during the discussions with the focus-groups interviews. One child asked why the educators should invite parents to school, because parents were not educators, and they could not take over the educators’ work. On this issue children were answering from their hearts, not answering the question. They said what they were feeling parents are not supposed to be at school at all. The majority answered that they strongly agreed that parents should not be invited to come to school 30 out of 40, and only 10 said they agreed. It seems they wanted parents out of school activities for their own purpose.

3.6.3.2.4. Low level of literacy in parents

This issue is not totally different from the one analyzed in 3.6.3.2 and 3.6.3.3. Parents felt that the school is for educators, so the reason for sending their children to school was for them to be educated. They (parents) could only do their part at home. The majority of parents said that they were not educated, and they wanted their children to be educated by the educators. I told them that the educators could not manage to do the work without their assistance. They wanted to know what could be done by illiterate people. I had to make use of examples of the olden days when there were no schools and parents did educate their children. I made an example about the Western Cape Education Department in the past that did not have black high schools in the Southern Cape. Parents had to accompany their children to the Eastern Cape looking for schools to accommodate their children and boarding places. Parents managed to do that, but they were not educated. I told them that I am the product of one of those children, who had to leave home at an early age of 13 years to go to Eastern Cape for a higher education. In this way I hoped to show them that educators need them at schools even if they are illiterate. It was also good that some of the parents understood the reasons to be involved and that not all of them were literate. Some of those who were partially literate were examples for those who did not understand that most homes are in a better position now because of their educated children. Educated children can change the family life, from poor to better conditions. One parent said that “The child at school will always need a parent to guide him/her through life” and another parent added: “that child needs both parents and educators to pull through”.

Educators understand the problem of illiterate parents because they (educators) themselves are the products of illiterate parents. They showed a lot of respect when discussing this issue. They were sympathetic to illiterate parents since they knew from their own backgrounds how an illiterate parent struggles to provide means to educate his/her children. The majority of educators (18) felt that illiterate parents should be treated with dignity and respect. The school’s activities must be explained thoroughly to them and they should be encouraged to be involved.

Learners again on this issue of illiterate parents were according to my observations, defensive. No child wants people to know that her mother/father cannot read or write.
Once again, as on the above issues, they misunderstood the point of involving illiterate parents in their education. Of the 40 learners questioned about the problem of illiterate parents not understanding school’s ethos 20 out of 40 answered that they strongly agreed, and 16 agreed, 2 strongly disagreed and 2 agreed. One of the learners said, “Neither of my parents can read nor write. Why should they be brought to participate in school activities – to make a laughing stock of them I suppose?” As an educator and an experienced one, I explained to the children that most of us as educators had come from homes with parents who were not educated. I added that we also grew up in a similar situation in a township like theirs. To make them feel even better and be able to give more data I explained to them that they were in a better position now than we had been when we were children. Homes have electricity and running water, and their parents are better off than ours were. Their parents are working, ours did not have work. Only our fathers were working, sometimes far from home.

3.6.3.2.5 Notices not given to parents

The majority of parents said that there were few meetings that they had not attended according to the notices that they had received. These answers almost confused me because; according to the educators parents were not attending school meetings. Later it became clear that most parents did not receive the notices from their children. The children either lost or forgot to give the notices to parents.

The learners on their side admitted not handing over the notices to their parents. Some even said that they did not see the need to give their parents the notices because they always just read them and then threw them away. Some learners added that their parents could not read or write. Educators also did not understand why parents were not attending meetings; they just thought that parents just did not care as usual.

3.6.3.3 Consequences as discussed by parents, educators and learners

3.6.3.3.1 Introduction

The following results were revealed by the data analysis as consequences of non-involvement by the parents, educators and learners.

- Gap between school and home. Both parents and educators complained about the lack of communication between themselves (educators and parents)
- Discipline problems at schools
- High drop-out rate
- Teenage pregnancies
- High failure rates
- A drastic in the standard of the school
- Value of education was being threatened owing to the lack of input from both the parent and the educators.

Dealing with the points mentioned above was not as easy as it initially seemed. I did not expect some of the reactions that came from all the participants, parents, educators and learners. Not once had it crossed my mind that the topic that I was dealing with could cause such emotional stress to parents and educators. The parents were the most affected
by the consequences mentioned in the analysis. As usual the fathers were blaming the mothers for spoiling the children. The mothers were blaming the fathers for not being there at home to assist with the support that they need when raising children. The only consolation was that the study is trying to improve the situation and feedback will be brought to them when findings and recommendations can be discussed for implementation.

3.6.3.3.2 Gap between school and home

Both parents and educators were concerned about the widening gap between the school and the home. Parents were concerned because they did not know about the bad behaviour and the peer pressure that their children were being exposed to at school. The parents mentioned bad behaviour by learners that they had heard about over the news in other schools, and wanted to know whether educators in their schools were experiencing the same. The parents were shocked and surprised when they were told about things happening at their schools while they (the parents) were unaware and uninvolved.

Parents also made comments about educators who were out of touch with the realities of the communities that they were serving. Parents claimed that if this gap could be closed then educators would understand some challenges that they as parents were experiencing.

Learners also mentioned the problems that they encounter and being afraid of reporting either at home or at school. The majority of learners also mentioned the increasing rate of bullying, violence, crime and gangsters at schools.

3.6.3.3.3 Discipline problems

All three groups (parents, educators and learners) were very concerned about the amazing rate at which the discipline was losing momentum in both schools. They were all concerned about the deterioration of morals and values amongst the young generation of the 21st century. Parents added that the children had become undisciplined at home as well. Some parents blamed the family set up e.g.: Broken families, blended families, single parents, teenagers staying with boyfriends instead of their parents. Both educators and parents agreed that learners can have different ‘attitudes and behaviours’ that they display at home, at school and when they are with friends.

One parents remarked that “The children today have low morals and you wonder how they behave at schools, when us as parents don’t know what to do anymore. Education is being changed to the detriment of our children’s sinking morals. These children are given more rights than us as adults. There is no discipline in our schools at all, I pity the poor educators”.

Educators added that there are lots of problems facing our youngsters these days. Regardless of the countless problems facing our teenagers we needed to work together to discipline them. Some educators believe that the bad discipline shown by individual learners at school is the responsibility of the parents and it arises from the background. Educators also mentioned the high rate of drug and alcohol abuse, crime and violence in schools. They also said that some of these learners come to school drunk, and some carry liquor in their schools’ bags. They (educators) are sometimes forced to play the role of
policeman and search the learner’s bags. The use of cell phones in classes contributes towards ill discipline. Educators blame parents for buying expensive cell phones for their children and for allowing them to bring them to school. Parents admitted being guilty saying that all children demand cell phones and say that they are the only ones in the whole school without them.

Learners also stated their problems about discipline at school. They mentioned the different ‘attitudes and behaviours’ that they all display in front of their parents, their educators and their friends. This was interesting because it had also been mentioned by the parents, that their children behave well in front of them and yet at school they displayed other behaviour. They again mentioned that “it’s so difficult for a person to stop each other as far as discipline is concerned because they will pick on you and everyone will hate you, and you will be seen as an informer”. Once you are identified as an informer you will not be safe wherever you go. Learners also mentioned that the most problematic learners at school are those repeating the grades or according to them (learners) those who are struggling with the curriculum or who are ‘mentally challenged’.

This particular topic almost changed my data collection and my topic to discussing discipline and violence at schools. Yet I could not ignore the data that emerged because the discipline and violence issue was also the major problem that needed parents to be involved at schools and to help educators to deal with the crisis of discipline in schools. Both parents and learners have to devise means of behavioural strategies to deal with violence at schools as advised by Mayer (2002:100).

### 3.6.3.3.4 Teenage pregnancy/drop-outs

Parents were overwhelmed when they found out about how their teenagers were falling pregnant at an alarming rate. Parents, especially mothers, become very emotional when we discussed this particular issue of teenage pregnancy. I remember one parent bursting into tears and saying “Even today I can’t understand how my daughter fell pregnant because she was always at home with us, even during weekends, we went to church together, but today I know how”. Fortunately at this particular church there was an educator who explained to the parents that learners leave homes early in the morning, dressed in full school uniform but don’t turn up at school. Parents leave homes early for work believing that their children are at school. Because of the communication breakdown between parents and educators, it is usually too late and nothing can be done when the child has fallen pregnant. The end result of the whole scenario is dropping out of school and becoming an immature parent and having to work to raise the child. For some it becomes very difficult to continue with school after the birth of a child and those who are fortunate not to be infected with HIV and Aids have to look for jobs to support the babies. Some who are not fortunate find out after the child’s birth (or before) that they are infected and become too ill to continue with their school career. Others end up dead.

Parents were blaming the new government policies, e.g.: Children’s rights, girls being allowed to come to school even if they are pregnant, the right to decide whether or not the child can have an abortion, and the abolishment of corporal punishment at schools and at home. This topic brought a lot of emotional stress for parents especially mothers and
single-parents. Most fathers put the blame on their wives for spoiling the girls and allowing them to do as they please.

Educators were just as frustrated as parents about this particular topic. They expressed their frustrations, anger and dissatisfaction about the government which makes rules and regulations without taking into consideration the people who have to implement them. The department expects educators to implement these rules. The department expects educators to be doctors, nurses (midwives), psychologists, social workers, parents and counselors. As if that were not enough, now they are expected to deal with pregnant learners in classes. In one of the schools one teacher told the experience of a pregnant learner as follows:

“I will never forget the day when I took one learner to the hospital because she was screaming with terrible stomach ache. I found out later that the learner was pregnant and in the process of giving birth and it happened in my car. I did not know what to do. I almost lost control of the car, but again I had to control myself because three lives were at stake here, i.e. mine, the teenage mother and the new born baby. After the ordeal I could not sleep for some months and every time when I got into my car the scene replayed in my mind until I decided to sell my car after two months.”

Educators are also not supposed to use their cars to transport sick learners; they must summon the parents to school. In the case mentioned above, the educator took a huge risk that could have cost him/her, - his/her job. He could even have ended up in jail. These are some of the problems facing educators in our schools today, without help from the government or the parents. From the data that emerged from both parents and educators it was clear that teenage pregnancy was the major problem of the year (2007).

Learners in this case were the guilty ones because the girls were the ones falling pregnant whilst the boys were the ones making girls pregnant. They also said much and came up with different suggestions, causes, consequences and solutions. Amongst their suggestion they all felt strongly about the expulsion of both the ‘mother’ (in this case the pregnant teenager) and the ‘father’ (in this case the father of the baby) if they were both students in schools, because there was a tendency of expelling the girl alone and the boy would continue with his studies while the girl raise the child alone. During the debate, the discussions become very hot with the boys blaming the girls for falling pregnant. I had to take over control and bring the debate back to parental involvement in the education of their children. They were now discussing falling pregnant and the use of preventative measures, which was not the purpose of this study. Girls on the other side were blaming the boys for taking them for granted. I could not blame them any way for getting carried away it was normal.

After they had recuperated and come back to the topic of the study, they also understood the frustrations and stresses that teenage pregnancy brings to the school, the family and the community at large. It seems these teenage girls bring unwanted babies into the world and still do not learn from their mistakes and make more. They also mentioned the problems brought about by the new legislations of the government. The issue of the grant (money given to children under the age of 14) was also pointed out. It was surprising to hear learners speaking like grown ups about how this grant is being spent by the teenage mothers. They also discussed the degrading of a person after pregnancy and all problems
associated with pregnancy. Learners discussed the effect this pregnancy has on their schools results and achievements in all spheres of school life.

3.6.3.3.5 High failure rate/bad school attendance

The whole session was an eye opener for parents, because they could not understand why many children were failing and becoming drop-outs. They said they were grateful for this opportunity to be involved in the study because they also gained a lot, and the platform allowed them to discuss sensitive issues that were difficult to discuss at home. They said now they knew why township schools were underperforming and learners failing in numbers. It was because of what the children were doing behind their backs. They understood that school attendance was also affected by the behaviour of learners, who played truant from school. They spent a lot of time discussing the consequences of dodging school. They also understood the frustration of educators for not knowing what was happening.

Educators were aware all the time of the consequences of learners not attending school and did not have a correct platform to discuss them. They also stated that the employer (government in this case) is always blaming educators for high failure rates in schools. Learners as well were quite aware of the consequences of not attending school and failing more than once. Learners mentioned that most of the drop-outs and failures at school increased unemployment and cheap labour. The learners also emphasized the breeding of bad citizens for the country. I must agree these were the most interesting consequences coming from the learners themselves.

3.6.3.4 Solutions of the non-involvement of parents as indicated by the parents, educators and learners.

3.6.3.4.1 Introduction

It was not easy to come by solutions because people who had to bring solutions to the problems of non-involvement obviously were parents, because they were, if I may say, the guilty party in this case. In all discussions, meetings, focus-group interviews, interviews and questionnaire completion finding a solution was a major obstacle for all. According to my own observation the major obstacle to deciding on solutions was the Government Acts, rules and regulations that protected children’s rights and left parents and educators without any means of disciplining children. After lengthy discussions with different groups the solutions mentioned were as follows:

3.6.3.4.2 Bridging the gap between schools and communities

The parents, educators and learners unanimously decided that the big gap between the school and the community needed to be closed immediately. There were relevant comments that the school forms part of the community and it must not be treated as an isolated place. There were many suggestions as to how this gap could be closed. Others suggested that this issue be taken to the councilors responsible for certain wards in the township so that they could discuss the matter and come up with suggestions. They went on to suggest that in each ward there should be two members elected to form part of the
committee for the parental involvement in schools. Other suggestions were that the matter be discussed in different churches every Sunday and that churches they should elect a committee to work with the members elected in the wards.

3.6.3.4.3 Volunteering parents

Parents and educators felt that since in their community they have people volunteering to serve in police work they could also have volunteers for the schools. They agreed that these volunteers would work with educators, learners and councilors to minimize the problems of discipline at schools and also to serve in the school’s fundraising committees.

It was also explained that these groups needed to work in conjunction with the Schools’ Governing Bodies so as to decrease the load of the governing bodies. The volunteers will have to volunteer themselves and explain to the meeting in which part of the school’s activities they would like to be involved.

3.6.3.4.4 Improving disciplinary measures at schools

As it is stated above that the decision was taken of having volunteers helping in maintaining discipline at schools, it was also suggested that each school should ‘adopt a cop’. This was one of the suggestions brought about by one parent who was a policeman, who had knowledge about ‘adopting a cop’. He explained the term ‘adopt a cop’ to parents, as having a policeman who is responsible for a particular to see that things are done in an orderly fashion and that the learners are also not transgressing. This particular policeman would be contacted by the school whenever the schools experience a problem.

Parents, educators and learners also added that the educators and principals should strictly adhere to the schools rules and conduct as stipulated in the Schools Act of 1996 (84). They also emphasized the issue of having disciplinary committees in schools to deal seriously with problems pertaining to ill discipline of learners at schools. It was also discussed that minor problems must be taken seriously by these committees because major problems start with minor problems.

No participants could come up with an agreement as to how these transgressors could be punished. Some parents and some educators were blaming the government for removing corporal punishment from schools, Sandall (1998:136), 2.7.10. Some parents also agreed that corporal punishment was not the solution to the problems of discipline at schools, Joubert & Prinsloo (1999:55) and Department of Education (2000:12), 2.7.10. They used examples about their own homes situations where some of them were still administering corporal punishment. As one parent explained, “it does not help, because you punish a child today for any transgression then the following day the same child does the same thing all over again”.

All the stakeholders understood that discipline was a major problem that hindered learning at schools. They unanimously agreed that the solution to this problem should come from them all not from the school, government, the SGB or learners alone. The idea of having disciplinary committees at schools was good. One parent remarked that during the past they had street committees who were responsible for problems happening
in the community. The street committees were responsible for crime in their area, bad behaviour and violence. Most parents were familiar with the street committees so they felt that the street committees should work together with educators and disciplinary committees at schools. They must all take into consideration the fact that schools were government property with rules and regulations that had to be followed in any disciplinary action.

3.6.3.4.5 Educating learners more about life long lessons based on sex, drug abuse and crime

All participants in their different groups during different times and at different places had heated arguments when it came to this topic (2.6.5). Parents were blaming the Government and its policies as far as sex and teenage pregnancies were concerned. Educators were blaming the Department of Education for allowing teenagers to come to school pregnant. Learners were blaming parents for not informing them about danger of being involved in sexual activities, drug abuse and crime. Some learners said that some of the things that they do, have been have learned from adults. Other learners said that they are living in a corrupt world with corrupt adults, who are selling drugs and doing crime. I had to intervene in all the participants’ deliberations on this issue and tell them that regardless of the situations we found ourselves in, we still needed solutions.

Parents suggested that these issues must be taught at home, churches and at schools. Parents warned one another not to be afraid of discussing these things with their children. They also warned one another about the ‘funny reactions’ that they must notice in their children, especially during the adolescent stage or even earlier. One of the parents said “It does not help these days to be shy or afraid to speak to your children because children will know and learn these things from other ‘educators’ outside the family”. Another parent in another session said: “All the world has stages where we learn to do things and each of us must play a part”. It was clear to me that parents wanted to be involved in educating their children about life-long lessons. There were also suggestions that parents should build friendships with their children, so that children would not be scared to tell them if they were involved or being forced to be involved in anything. One parent said, “You must be your child’s best friend and build trust between yourselves; your child must not be scared of asking any advice from you as a parent”.

3.6.3.4.6 Educating parents about Positive Parenthood

The issue of ‘Positive Parenthood’ was raised by a parent who was an educator. The particular parent/educator was involved in Safe Schools Cluster (a new structural committee composed by the Department of Education for dealing with the safety of both learners and educators in the Western Cape Schools). Safe Schools in their programs teach parents about Positive Parenthood. In Positive Parenthood parents are taught how to be positive parents, i.e. trusting their children, teaching them during the early stages to have self-esteem, to believe in themselves, not to be coaxed to do wrong things. Parents are also encouraged to start paying attention to their children during the early stages of their school lives. Parents are ensured that if they pay attention to their children’s education during their early stages of school lives, their children will be empowered to deal with school work independently even later in life.
Parents are also encouraged to love and respect their children and spend more time with them. Parents are taught not to spend more time with material things that can be destroyed or vanish in a minute. They are encouraged to help their children towards a good and better direction that will make their family lives better. As I was also a member of this organization (Safe Schools Cluster) as a deputy chairperson, I added more to what my colleague was explaining. I explained that once in a gathering we were told that if a parent neglects a child, it’s like killing that child and killing a child is killing the nation and destroying the future.

People used to workshop parents in these gatherings are mostly priests from different denominations. Parents are also encouraged to educate their children with Christian values and morals. In certain cases the Bible is used to confirm some teachings from the scriptures. Parents are also encouraged to form their own organization where they can motivate each other or give advice to each other about positive parenthood.

3.6.3.4.7 Educating educators about involving parents at schools

Educators explained that they were not trained in colleges or universities as to how to involve parents in the education of their children. It was then decided that the Education Department or the Circuit Managers must work out a plan in their budget to do a workshop for educators to teach them how to involve parents in the education of their children.

It was also emphasized that educators must have empathy for parents because parents are in the same situation or even in a worse situation than the parents of the educators themselves. Very few educators come from middle class homes with parents who are literate or well-off. Most educators know exactly how an uneducated person feels amongst the educated people and how scared parents become when they have to meet educated people.

3.6.3.4.8 Promoting the value of education

It was clear in all the meetings that the standard of education these days has gone down. All the participants involved in the research were concerned about this huge problem. Parents specifically mentioned that they are worried that they themselves were not educated. They also spoke about the way education has been made accessible to all learners and that they don’t need money these days to be educated. The issue of non-payment of the school fees was mentioned and the free stationery that is supplied by the government in schools. Each child needs only to be motivated to stay at school, so as to improve his/her family situation. Other parents used examples of children who came from very poor families, but because of education those families have improved and are now counted amongst the rich families. Some educators used examples of themselves not all educators have a glamorous background. Most of them (educators) come from poor backgrounds, but because of education they have managed to change their way of living and their families’ situations have become better than before.

Whilst this issue was discussed by parents, most of them become very emotional and started crying because they said that these children were destroying their (parents’) dreams. They said that it was a dream of each and every parent to have an educated
child, but children these days decide to choose the streets, money, crime and drugs above school.

The issue of working in taverns and small spaza shops was mentioned. Parents and educators mentioned the availability of jobs around their townships that made these learners leave school and work for a small amount of money. In certain cases these children were paid with liquor or drugs, others would be asked to sell these drugs. Some parents mentioned that during the olden days people were working in the mines because jobs were very scarce. They also mentioned that a person had to go to Johannesburg for jobs and others died in the mines. All parents and educators were concerned about the 21st century generation and their educational aims and objectives.

### 3.6.4 CONCLUSION OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The empirical study concludes that the role played by parents in the education is crucial in ensuring the success of the learners. A number of critics in the study acknowledge the importance of parental involvement in ensuring quality education for their children. Vassallo (2000:1) points out that parental involvement in a child’s education is a strong predictor of learner achievement: typically, the more involved the parents, the better off the child. He also confirms that the key to schools, reform is the parent.

A study done by Amato (1991:543) with children in U.S. confirms that there is a positive relationship between parental control and scholastic achievement: The more control parents had over their children, the better the children’s scholastic achievement was. Therefore educators and parents have to find each other and work together for the sake of the children in all schools. Principals and the SMT must devise means of involving parents to improve schools and results especially in the township schools all over South Africa, not only the schools involved in this study.

The communities and schools need to join hands and fight the ill-discipline, crime, violence and drug abuse in schools. Since the same people or learners who are doing these wrong things come from the same communities, it is the duty of the same communities to combat crime. A united community can defeat any challenge standing on its way. During the olden days people gathered together to fight any enemy and they succeeded, they can still do it now, and nothing is impossible if people work together and trusted each other.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The study has revealed important opinions on each of my three questions investigated, namely causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children, consequences of non-involvement and solutions to the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children.

In this chapter I shall briefly discuss the findings which emerged from the literature study and the empirical study. In this chapter I intend making use of the literature study and comparing it with the empirical study and give an account of what the study revealed about the three original questions. This will be followed with some recommendations and a few concluding comments.

4.2 The major causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children revealed by the study.

4.2.1 Introduction

The study clearly shows that there are many complex factors contributing to the problem of non-involvement of parents. Doing the study in the township has taught me many things that I will treasure forever. The study reveals the main causes for the non-involvement of parents are as follows:

4.2.2 Relationship and contact between schools and homes

The study revealed that it is indisputable that good school-home communication is critical to good school-home relationships. Catron and Allen (1993:51) agree and argue that in the Early Childhood Programmes, close contact and regular communication between home and the school improves the consistency with which parents and educators work towards the desired goals of promoting the child’s development, also (2.2.1). It also promotes parental identification with the learning programme and the teacher-parent relationship grows, which will in turn increase parents’ satisfaction and children’s success.

The literature study also mentioned the issue of the gap between the school and the community, Boyer (1991:33), 2.7.7. McLaughlin (2001:14), in (2.7.3) emphasized the importance of the school’s programmes and organizational programmes that include the community members and the young people, and how they are effective in molding the lives of the young people. If schools and communities are not working together, it won’t be easy to keep the learners busy after school hours.

4.2.3 Socio-economic factors

The literature study proves that parents, irrespective of their socio-economic status, want their children to succeed, Epstein (1995:703), and Parry 2000:68) (2.5.2). Epstein and the other authors do not agree with the perception from educators that parents from poor socio-economic backgrounds do not care for their children. The literature and the
empirical study have proven the statement by educators to be false. Parents regret that they were not educated and they want the best for their children, regardless of their socio-economic factors. Konzal cited by Bridgemohan et, al. (2005:9) agrees adding:” When educators really listen to parents they can learn much to help shape what goes on in their schools in ways that meet the needs of parents and children.”

The literature also emphasizes that educators must acquaint themselves with the community that they serve so as to understand the problems in the community. It has been also clear that the illiteracy, poverty, transport problems play a major role in the causes of non-involvement of parents.

### 4.2.4 Changes in education system

The literature study reveals that the major changes that took place in the Education Department has played a major part in frightening parents from being involved in the school’s activities. Parents were never keen to be involved in educational matters because they always believed that was the task of the educated people.

The Department of Education (1997b:27), states that the involvement of parents is a crucial thing in education, (2.5.5.2). Parents were sensitive before the implementation of OBE to be involved in school matters, how they can be involved now that there is even more of a change from OBE to RNCS (Revised National Curriculum Statement). That alone intimidates parents even more. Most parents state that they left school before OBE was introduced, so they don’t know any thing. They sometimes make jokes about the new changes in education, stating that the reason why learners are behaving so badly is because they are ‘the children of OBE. The children of OBE do not get any corporal punishment’. The sarcasms will be directed to educators as if they are the people who are introducing the changes. Christie (1999:283) confirms that the new changes do not give educators a chance to take decisions or to know what is really happening. How much more difficult for the parents. In the empirical study educators voiced their frustration about the new changes that put them in a bad state of dilemma, and parents also voiced their frustrations about the new changes in education which leaves them even more confused.

Education policies are a top-down process, where educators are expected to implement changes without questioning them. Parents feel that they must be included in the changes of policies. Parents also suggested that they must be allowed to discuss the school policies and have an input, Stern (2003:47) and Epstein & Dauber (1993:61), 2.7.11.

### 4.2.5 Divorce/blended families

The literature finds this topic as one of the major causes of non-involvement. The structures illustrated in figure 2.1 on page l1, (2.5.7.2) displays the confusion that comes after the family decides to split. Neither the child nor the educators knows who is supposed to be included in the whole thing of parental involvement. Sometimes the child stays with the mother or the father, in certain instance the parents will share their responsibility of bringing up the child. In most cases children are left to stay with their mothers. As is always the case when there is a meeting about school’s activities the majority will be women. This study has proven that mothers are more responsible than
fathers when it comes to educating and taking care of their children. The study also showed that it was usually the mother’s task to help their children with school work and if the mother was not educated that particular child will suffer. Singh, et al. (2004:305) agreed that in their study 80% of the households visited in their study revealed that the female parents were the ones who attended school meetings and were keen to know about their children’s progress. This study was not meant to compare the women to men as far as the maintenance or caring for the children is concerned. I felt that I had to mention this difference because of the number of female participants available in all the instances of data gathering compared to the number of males. In all the sessions conducted with parents, the majority of people attending will always be more females than men. I am not referring only to sessions held in churches because the argument might be most men do not attend church, that the majority in all churches are women.

Educators also confirmed the above point of women struggling alone to raise children because of one educator who said:

“Whenever there are things needed at school children will have different answers as to why he/she does not have what is needed. One day the child will say that my mother said she is going to try, the next day the child will say I went to the place where my dad stays and he said he does not have money, so as educators we don’t know who to contact to come to school or to solve the child’s problem”.

The educators also mentioned the trauma that children experience during divorce or separation, and how it affects the children’s performance at school. The educators say that it’s difficult to ask children about their family problems concerning parent’s divorce or separation because children become emotionally disturbed and sometimes they cry almost the whole day. One educator was also very emotional about this issue and said, “I will never forget the day when one child in my class begged me to go and tell his dad to come home, and tell him that ‘I love him very much and I miss him, and I need money for my sports clothes’, and the child said to me I must promise that I would do that. How could I do such a thing; and this child told me that he trusted me. I was stressed out for the whole week, when it was the period for this particular learner’s class. I could not look at the little eyes full of hope everyday that I would give him the assurance that I had spoken to his dad.” There are so many problems facing educators at school besides the curriculum.

4.2.6 Parents’ attitude towards learners.

This major cause of non-involvement comes from the parents who were interviewed; it does not form part of the causes that come from the literature.

Some parents want to be involved in the school’s activities but they are nervous of the behaviour of certain individual learners. They explain that these children have a bad influence on other children and they come from bad backgrounds. If they (parents) work in a school and have to deal with these pupils they would not be able to control themselves. They stated that certain individuals learners can only be managed by educators because educators because were trained to deal with different behavioural attitudes of children and they (parents) are not trained for such things.
Other parents are reluctant to come near the school because of the behaviour of their children at school. They are being called time and again for disciplinary hearings. They are shy to attend a school function because of their children’s behaviour and are never sure how these children might behave when they (parents) are part of the function. Some have given up and have totally lost control of their children. They don’t have any other means of trying to try and discipline them, so they choose to stay away from anything that might embarrass them. They claim that the learner’s morals and values are appalling.

4.2.7 School climate/environment

The historical reasons mentioned in 2.5.6 have made parents have a negative attitude towards schools. Since parents have been excluded in most school activities they still think that things are the same. The school environment and climate are still a closed book to parents since they have been told not to interfere by the then Education Department. Parents are still very sceptical about being involved in schools.

Lezotte & Jacoby (1990:147) states the importance of the climate and the environment of the school for parental involvement (2.7.5). It is emphasized that parents must feel safe around the school buildings and also sees the peaceful order in which the school is monitored. The literature made it clear that the parents will never complain if they see that their lives are threatened. They will just stay away from the school.

The school atmosphere and environment is also very important and it must be conducive to teaching and learning in a school. Parents must feel that their assistance is needed at school and also appreciated. Principals and educators must invite parents to come to school and participate in school activities.

4.2.8 Lack of knowledge about the importance of involvement of parents in the education of their children.

Many parents still feel that they are not needed in schools. In the past they were told that the ‘expert’ would deal with the education of their children so they are still doubtful about involving themselves in school activities. Some parents are afraid to go to schools because they still feel that schools are for educated people only 2.7.11. Some parents need more time to be convinced about their involvement in school activities and how they can contribute.

4.3 The major consequences of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children revealed by the study.

4.3.1 Introduction

The study and the literature revealed critical consequences caused by the non-involvement of parents in the education of their children. To most parents the study has been an eye opener and has answered many of their questions.

The study and the literature revealed the following as the major consequences of the non-involvement of parents in their children’s education:
4.3.2 Widening gap between homes and schools

All the stakeholders realized the consequence of the gap between the home and the school (3.6.3.3.2). It was also mentioned that most of the damage that has already happened at schools and with some learners was caused by this huge gap between educators and parents.

The gap was also causing problems as far as communication is concerned. Both educators and parents agreed that the communication between them was very poor; as a result there were assumptions from both sides (2.6.2). Parents on one side thought that educators do not need their assistance and educators on the other side thought that parents do not care about their children’s education.

4.3.3 Bad school attendance by the learners

Both educators and parents agreed that the bad school attendance by learners is caused by the lack of communication between them. Parents did not know that some of the children were not attending school (2.6.3 and 3.6.3.3.4).

Learners took advantage of the fact that both parents and educators do not see each other to discuss their absenteeism.

4.3.4 Discipline at schools

The study highlighted the huge problem faced by educators at schools when it came to the discipline of learners. Educators explained that learners were disrespectful at school because they knew that their parents would not come to school or won’t hear about their misbehaviours at schools (2.6.6).

The literature explained some possible reasons for learners behaving the way they do. Robertson (1999:78) and Jones & Jones (1995:6) in (2.6.6) explained the social factors that can cause a child to misbehave.

All the stakeholders (parents, educators and learners) agreed that learners behave differently in front of their educators, parents and their friends, which make it even more difficult to be able to trace the cause (3.6.3.3.3). Parents and educators were the most affected about the moral degeneration of the learners. The most disturbing part was that it seemed as if it was difficult for them to come up with effective means of disciplining these learners. According to them (parents and educators) the government was protecting the children with all the laws of the children’s rights. They specifically did not like the idea of abolishing corporal punishment in schools, Department of education (2000:12).

4.3.5 High failure rate and drop-outs

The study has also highlighted the reasons for a high failure rate in township black high schools. Both parents and educators agreed that the results of bad attendance and the poor discipline displayed by the learners at schools were the reasons for their failure.
The literature has exposed other reasons for the escalating number of drop-outs in schools. Smit & Liebenberg (2003:2), (2.6.4) blame educators for the alienation of learners. The two researchers state that the alienation, humiliation, shouting and ridicule of learners because of their background and poor conditions them leave school. The parents only complained about their children being alienated by the other learners because of their poor status but mentioned nothing about themselves.

The educators especially explained that this kind of consequence (high failure rate) has a bad impact for them. The Department of Education does not understand the conditions that they (educators) are working under. Whenever the learners fail in numbers the fingers are pointed at them as educators.

4.3.6 Teenage pregnancy

The study reveals the frustration that is brought about by the teenage pregnancy in the different families. Parents were complaining about the high ratio of unemployment that they as parents have to deal with and the extra burden that their teenagers are bringing home. The fighting between the married couples blaming each other for the pregnant child caused another stir. Parents were blaming themselves for not making sure that their children were not dodging school and being involved in sexual activities. Both parents and educators were blaming the government for allowing pregnant children to come to school.

The empirical study and the literature have proven that teenage pregnancy is an extra burden to the already bad socio-economic status in the townships. It has also proven that teenage pregnancy reduces the chances of teenage mother improving their lives. Bartell (1999:19), (2.6.5) concurs that teenage mothers have to drop out of school and care for the new born baby and not return to school to further their studies. They either join the unemployed group or the domestic workers. Others are lucky to be able to receive the government grant.

4.4 Major solutions revealed by the study

4.4.1 Introduction

The findings of the study showed that parental involvement was a crucial factor in the education of their children. Both parents and educators agreed that parents should start during the early ages of the children to be involved until the child reaches adulthood. The study also revealed that parents who spent some quality time with their children each day tend to be good motivators to their children. It also revealed that parental involvement in the education of their children results in better achievement by learners.

The study and the literature revealed some solutions to the problem of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children. Most of the solutions have been revealed by the previous researchers on the same topic of parental involvement in schools. This study revealed the following:
4.4.2 Training of educators to involve parents in schools

Educators have mentioned in the study that in their training in colleges they were not trained to involve parents. The study suggests that this kind of training must be done (3.6.3.4.7). The training must explain clearly to the educators that they cannot function without the parents of the children that they are teaching.

The training should involve means and ways of involving parents in such a way that parents should also benefit from being involved. Illiterate parents must be taught how to read and write. They must be able to read with their children.

4.4.3 Promoting the value of education

Both parents and educators felt that the values of education in the generation of today need to be promoted (3.6.4.8). The children in the past knew that the only way to get a better job was to be educated. Children today do not care about better jobs. For them what is important is that they do get jobs no matter what kind. In the olden days for people to work they had to go to the mines and that was a difficult decision to take because one had to leave one’s family behind. These days’ people get jobs in towns near where they live. Most people are self-employed, some own spaza shops (small shops in the township), some own taverns and they employ children to work during weekends. When they receive even a small amount of money they don’t see the reason to continue with school.

Some parents and learners thought that we are fighting a losing battle, but some felt that it was worth fighting for the generation who is going to run this country in the future.

4.4.4 Promotion of Christian morals and values

The literature review encourages the promotion of Christian morals and values to the generation of the 21st century. Films and movies that these learners are watching over televisions and things that they download from the Internet are not good for young people.
Children have lost the moral values of their own cultures and they are following cultures of the other nations. Parents must lead by example; if parents are practicing good moral values the child will follow them. Parents must train their children from an early age to do the right things at all times, and the child must be acknowledged for each and every good thing that she/he does. Praise the child; give him/her something for any better performance done by the child. Encourage children to read more and more books, and also as parents read so that the children can learn from you. Discourage children to watch TV all the time and play games at home as a family.

4.4.5 Role models (parents/educators)

The study reveals that the first educator for the child is his/her parents. The family and parents play a crucial role in the upbringing of a child (2.7.6). The literature also confirms that what a child is going to be, in most cases is determined by the older people surrounding him/her Wolfgang (1999:95) and Vockell (1991:279) in 2.7.6. They suggest
that educators and parents must behave well and set examples for learners and be good role models.

The study points out the importance of values, norms and cultural beliefs that the child learns from home, and emphasizes that those cannot be taught at school. They are taught at home (2.7.6). The study also defines the children’s homes as safe havens where children need to grow securely and be surrounded by people who love and support them. The study goes on to say that a child growing under those circumstances will make a good citizen of the country (2.7.3). Strydom (1997:13) in (2.5.7.2) explains the family as a place that provides a child with security and care. Each child has to belong to a family to learn how to behave and do things in life. Some educators feel that the child’s behaviour explains the kind of background that the particular child is coming from. The empirical study does not agree with the latter statement by the educators about the child’s background. The respondents in the empirical study state that children display different characters at home, at school and when they are with their friends. The child can come from a good family background and because of peer pressure he/she can do things that do not reflect his family background.

4.4.6 Parental empowerment and invitation

The empirical study and literature suggest that the principals, SMT and educators must make the empowerment and invitation of parents their major priorities at schools (3.6.3.2.1 and 2.7.2). Molepo (2000:73) in his study suggests that the three stakeholders (parents, educators and learners) have to be empowered to work like a three legged pot, where one could not work without the others. Each party must value and acknowledge the presence and need of each other.

The parents should be empowered by receiving the necessary information, guidance and support from the schools to prepare them for co-operation and participation (2.7.2). Once people are knowledgeable about what they are supposed to do, they will be free to participate. The goals of both educators and parents of educating the children for a better future will be met.

4.4.7 Discipline in schools

The findings of the empirical study and the literature study revealed that parental involvement is crucial especially when it comes to the discipline of learners in schools. Authors such as Robertson (1999:78) and Jones & Jones (1995:6) in (2.6.6) explained the social factors that cause children to misbehave.

All the stakeholders agreed on the way in which discipline must be dealt with in schools. The different causes of ill discipline by learners were discussed and the solutions were worked out. Everybody agreed that all the cases of ill discipline at schools must be taken seriously by both educators and parents.

Robertson (1999:78) says that some children at schools can be disruptive because ‘they have been subject to distorted or inadequate care throughout childhood due to a variety of family and economic difficulties’. These children who have suffered neglect from homes
will demand attention at schools from educators. Some of them (learners) are repeating classes because they cannot cope academically. In addition, school failure and behavioural problems are strongly associated. Jones & Jones (1995:6) stipulated some social factors in the life of a child that may positively or negatively influence his/her behaviour. They mentioned family break-ups, poverty, neglect, stressful lives and substance abuse either by the child himself or by the parents. Jones & Jones (1995:6) also mentioned the issues of emotional stress and inadequate skills.

4.4.8 Building bridges from schools to homes

Both the empirical study and literature study put emphasis on the issue of building bridges between schools and homes. Both parents and educators agreed that the issue of the non-existence of the bridges between home and schools was the major cause of all the problems experienced by both parities in educating the children.

De Villiers (2005:3) (2.7.8) mentioned ways in which the bridges could be built between parents and educators and how communication can be made stronger. Blackmore (1995:59), says that educators have a tendency to assume that ‘non-participation implies an apathetic or passive citizenry, lacking in both expertise and motivation’, but that is not always the case. Parents need to be invited to participate. They must understand that they are needed by educators at schools and be empowered to participate effectively.

According to Boyer (1991:33), (2.7.7) the policies must be well structured, they must “build bridges between home and school”. Through empowering parents, bridges can be easily built and partnership will be stronger than ever and schools will function accordingly.

4.4.9 Sex education for learners and parents

The study reveals that the lack of sex education is the major obstacle in most cases of teenage pregnancies and HIV and Aids. Most black people do not feel comfortable discussing sex with their children. Macleod (1999:150) in (2.6.5), say that parents play a very small role in educating and transferring information about sex to their teenage children. In some instances they even believe that talking about sex is the duty of educators. If a child is pregnant, some parents think that it is the failure of educators to do their work. Some parents only start talking about sex when the damage (pregnancy) has already happened, which is useless.

The study makes it clear that our parents have to be educated to deal with these important issues. It must be made clear to them that gone are the days when sex was only for adults. Because of this children may be influenced by the wrong people e.g. Peer pressure so parents have a duty in this regard. It is better for a child to do wrong things after he/she has been told by his/her parents not to do it, rather than saying he/she did not know. Our children are so advanced that it is better for us as parents to teach them crucial things about life before they learn it from outside sources.

Both parents and learners should be prepared to deal with this sensitive issue of sex. It must be made clear to parents that there is no need to hide anything from these children these days, because they know more than we do as parents. So if parents start hiding
things, children will lose trust and never believe a thing that the parents are saying. Be as open as possible and try to find out what the child knows and build from there onwards.

4.4.10 Policy to involve parents

The empirical study and the literature have proven that educators are not taught how to involve parents in the education of their children. The study stipulates that even in colleges where educators are trained, they are not taught how to involve parents in schools (2.7.7), (3.6.3.4.7). On the other side parents don’t know how to be involved in school activities. At the end you will find out that both parties are blaming each other for not being involved and yet neither knows how to work together.

According to Boyer (1991:33) the policies must be well structured, they must “build bridges between home and school”. Through empowering parents, bridges can be easily built and partnership will be strong. The stronger the partnership the more effective becomes the school and the relationship between educators and parents become stronger. Parents must also be taught the boundaries within which they have to be involved so that they don’t transgress. These boundaries must be stipulated clearly in the policy that involves parents and simply and easy language must be used, so that the parents could understand it easily.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.5.1 Introduction

The findings in the study confirms what Stern (2003:47) says about the school as a complex organization, governed by rules and regulations. The findings in the empirical study have proven that in most cases people could not find solutions to problems and in the end people tend to want to use their own discretion which will clash with government rules and regulations. An example of this is the issue of discipline in schools after the removal of corporal punishment. Most people still believe that the problem of discipline in school is caused by the changing of rules by the government. Even if people try to explain that corporal punishment was not the solution to discipline, most people believe that it is.

I have to come back to my study of parental involvement in the education of their children. The findings of the study indicate that most parents did not know that they have to be involved in school activities. Educators did not know that they have to invite parents to be involved and provide the means to involve parents; they only thought that parents did not care. During their (educators) training in colleges there was no specific teaching about involving parents in school activities. As far as educators are concerned they also need to be trained how to involve parents in school activities, since some educators regard parents as impossible or difficult to work with.

In this chapter I will summarise the conclusions that can be drawn from the study, I will also make some recommendations or suggestions for further action to be taken to improve parental involvement in school activities. According to Hall & Hall (1996:246), “recommendations should suggest attainable improvement, and therefore should arise
best from the people you have interviewed.” Robson, cited by Hall & Hall (1996:246) says that recommendations should ‘be clearly derived from the data.

This study has revealed important ideas and opinions on each of the three questions that were investigated. As a result of the study I would proudly suggest the following as strategies to be taken in improving parental involvement in the education of their children. These recommendations also provide answers to the SMT of both schools in answering the sub-questions about the causes of non-involvement of parents, the consequences of non-involvement and the solution to the problems of non-involvement.

4.5.2 Recommendations based on the findings

On the basis of the findings of this study it is recommended that:-

- Parents and educators must try their best to develop trust and good working relations at schools.
- Parents must develop interest in the education of their children from an early age up to high schools, so that the learners can be successful in their studies.
- Educators and parents have to work together towards one goal, to help children to be responsible and dedicated citizens of the country.
- Co-operation between parents and educators is a crucial thing for proper learning and teaching to take place.
- Strong ‘bridges’ between schools and homes must be built.
- The Education Department has a big role to play in levelling the fields between these two parties (Parents and educators) and by promoting collaboration and communication between the two.
- Educators should be empowered to work with parents and also have skills to empower parents to be able to participate effectively in school activities.
- The government should work hand in hand with schools and make use of the retired educators to educate illiterate parents, so that most parents can learn to read and write and thus read with their children. (A certain percentage of payment can be agreed upon, between the government and retired educators).
- More literature is needed about parental involvement (especially South African literature). Modules should be included in training colleges about parental involvement.
- The Education Department should try its best to promote reading in all schools, because reading is the best way to obtain knowledge.
Afternoon classes, morning classes and Saturday classes should be encouraged in high schools to keep the learners busy at all times and limit their free time as much as possible.

The Government and Education Department should discuss the issue of disciplining children in schools with the parents.

The communities should work together with the schools to combat crime, violence, burglary, drug abuse and alcohol abuse in schools.

The last special recommendation from me is that the government and the Education Department should make use of South African researchers, authors and any others who have done the research about parental involvement in training principals, SMTs, educators and governing bodies. In return those who have been trained can train others in their communities. Our country would be a better place to live in.

While doing this study I acquired so much knowledge. To my surprise some of the findings in the study have been done by previous researchers and my question is: How can this important knowledge reach the people who can make use of it? If the problem of non-involvement of parents had not bothered me I would never have known what I know today. I therefore recommend that something needs to be done to make the information gathered known to people so that the problems in schools could be improved.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The parents in the historically disadvantaged African schools need to learn to intervene in school issues. Gone are the days when parents waited only for results at the end of the year and if children did badly then educators were seen as being responsible for the failure. Parents must be involved at an early age of the child’s education till the child develops into adulthood. Parents must assist educators in educating their children by being involved in the school’s activities. Gone are the days when parents used to complain about the learners lack of discipline, low morals and values and as being the duty of educators. Parents must be part of improving low morals and helping the learners to understand the need for being disciplined and working towards’ one goal with educators.

The solutions to schools and education problems in our country are within our reach. We need to open our hearts, minds and souls to reach for the answers. The answers can only be available if we work together towards one common goal to build our country and have responsible citizens. Schools and the communities have to work together combat ignorance and illiteracy. All people must be able to read and write so as to assist their children. If illiterate people can start reading and writing with their Grade one (1) children, by the time the child is in Grade seven (7) the parent also would be able to read and write. The child and the parent could learn together, do spelling and counting together and their relationship could be stronger than ever.

The children need parents in order to grow and become responsible adults. If we as parents and educators could rescue one child, that child could change the lives of his/her
family members and these family members could influence the community. South Africa would be a better place and we can really boast about being South Africans.

Researching, writing and collecting data and putting it on the shelves do not solve our problems. The problems are escalating; steps need to be taken before it is too late.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


Mrs Joyce Majola
P.O. Box 377
PACALTSDORP
6534

Dear Mrs J. Majola

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM IN ENCOURAGING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN TWO TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS IN GEORGE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from 26th April 2007 to 22nd September 2007.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2007).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following schools: Imizamo Yethu Secondary and Thembalethu Secondary.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
   The Director: Education Research
   Western Cape Education Department
   Private Bag X91 14
   CAPE TOWN
   8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

for: HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 25th April 2007
ADDENDUM B

LETTER TO PARENT/CARER: Curriculum dialogue

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you will enjoy your holiday with your child/children. During the next term [write which term] I will be doing dance [name any subject] with my class. We would like your assistance in any kind of dance that you may be able to teach.

In [name of subject], we have been studying .........................................................

You may have [seen, read about, heard about] ..............................................................

I enjoy teaching the topic because .................................................................................

The most important reason for studying this topic, though, is to help learners to be able to

.............................................................. and also to understand .......... and..................

This will be useful when [or because]................................................................................

It would be good to hear about anything that interests you about [name of subject]. If you have any ideas, or any information that is useful, do let me know. You could fill in the slip, below.

Thanking you in advance

Mr/Ms/Mrs [educators' surname]
[Subject offered and Grade]

To: .................................................. Date: ..................................................

When I/we did [name of subject] in school, and since leaving school at home or at work,

my/our favourite topics and activities were/are ..........................................................

I/we have these ideas or resources that might be useful for learning about

[Name of subject]: ..........................................................................................

Name of Parent/Carer: ..........................................................................................

Contact numbers: Cell phone: ..........................................................

Home: ..........................................................

Work: ..........................................................

Source: Adapted from Stern (2003:47)
ADDENDUM C

POLICY AND PRACTICE TO INVOLVE PARENTS IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

GENERAL POLICY:

1. This policy on involving parents and carers is developed by .............. and reviewed annually by .............. and is the responsibility of ..............

2. The school prospectus and website are the responsibility of .................. and are kept up-to-date by ...........................................

3. Visitors to the school should be welcomed in this way ....................... and this is the responsibility of ...........................................

4. Parents/carers are informed about what their children are learning every .............. and these are the responsibility of ...........................................

5. Special events, to which parents are invited, include ......................... and are held at least every ...........................................

6. Parents / Carers are informed about their children’s educational progress by these means .... and the balance of positive / negative information aims to be .... and these are the responsibility of ..............

7. Parents / Carers are also contacted when .... and this is the responsibility of .......

8. Communication with parents / carers is clear and respectful, and translation is available if appropriate and possible, and this is the responsibility of ..............

9. Specific help and support of parents can be elicited when ..............

10. The school and parents should work together on ................................

11. The school looks after parents / carers dealing with the school by ........ and this is the responsibility of ..............

12. With respect to Child Protection, the named person in the school is ..............

13. A home-educator association [if there is one] is supported by the school, and is intended to .... and school support for the organization is the responsibility of ......

Source: Adapted from Stern (2003:47)
ADDENDUM D

PARENTS

Complete this questionnaire as honest as possible. WRITE a cross (X) under the following answers: AGREE, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE, if you agree with the statement written on the left. Only one cross per statement is accepted.

Parents views about the causes of the non-involvement in the education of their children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools climate not friendly to parents</td>
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<td>2. Parents are not empowered to be involved (Don’t know how to be involved)</td>
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<td>5. Parents don’t have time, too busy (work)</td>
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<td>7. Parents do not come to meetings because they don’t receive notices about the meetings</td>
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<td>8. Parents are losing control of their children</td>
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ADDENDUM E

EDUCATORS

Complete this questionnaire as honest as possible. WRITE a cross (X) under the following answers: AGREE, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE, if you agree with the statement written on the left. Only one cross per statement is accepted.

Educators' views about causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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ADDENDUM F

EDUCATORS AND PARENTS ONLY

Complete this questionnaire as honest as possible. WRITE a cross (X) under the following answers: YES, NO, OR SOMETIMES, if you agree with the statement written on the left. Only one cross per statement is accepted.

Table 2.1

How do educators view themselves in their efforts to involve parents in the education of their children and how do they view parent involvement in the school's activities.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are parents asked to assist in extra-mural activities at school?</td>
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<td>2. Are parents asked to support the school financially or do fundraising for the school?</td>
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<td>3. Does the school make sure that parents are welcomed when they visit the school?</td>
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<td>4. Is there anything done to help illiterate parents at school?</td>
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<td>5. Do the parents have an idea of the school policies and understand the part that they have to play as parents at school?</td>
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<td>6. Is there enough communication between educators and parents?</td>
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<td>7. Are parents asked to assist in classroom or visit classrooms</td>
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ADDENDUM G

LEARNERS

Complete this questionnaire as honest as possible. WRITE a cross (X) under the following answers: AGREE, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE, if you agree with the statement written on the left. Only one cross per statement is accepted.

Learners’ views about causes of non-involvement of parents in the education of their children.

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