

**PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT  
IN SELECTED QUINTILE FIVE PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Successful quintile five primary schools have specific characteristics to which they comply. Most of these features, such as curriculum planning, professional leadership, shared vision and mission and creating a learning environment can be managed from the Headmasters' office. In contrast, parental involvement is one aspect of successful schools that are not so easily managed. Parents' perception of parental involvement differs and also differs from that of the school management teams and the perception teachers have of parental involvement.

The purpose of the study is firstly to determine what parents' perception of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school are. Secondly, to determine what teachers' perceptions of parental involvement are, and thirdly to determine how parental involvement is manifesting in the policies of the National Education Department, Western Cape Education Department and three quintile five primary schools.

To achieve this objective, interviews were done with twenty, grade six parents of three different quintile five primary schools. The teachers completed a questionnaire and a study was made of the policies of the various departments of education and quintile five primary schools. Both a qualitative method, namely interviews and quantitative method namely questionnaires were used in order to achieve this goal. Furthermore, Critical Theory was applied to emancipate individuals and stakeholders from uncomfortable situations which may occur due to a difference in parental involvement perceptions.

After an extensive study of existing literature was conducted, interviews and questionnaires analysed and policies were studied, it was found that parents' perception of involvement relies mainly on support for their child and communication from the quintile five primary school. Teachers also feel that parental involvement entails support and communication, but parental involvement should be managed. The term managing indicates that teachers, in a quintile five primary school experience parental involvement as negative. The time has therefore become ripe that parental involvement must be seen as a parental support and not as parental involvement.

**KEYWORDS:** parents, perception, policies, parental involvement, quintile five primary school.

## OPSOMMING

Suksesvolle kwintiel vyf laerskole het spesifieke bestuurskenmerke waaraan hulle voldoen. Die meerderheid van dié kenmerke, byvoorbeeld bestuur van die kurrikulum, professionele leierskap, gedeelde visie en missie en die skep van 'n leeromgewing, kan vanuit die Hoof se kantoor bestuur word. Ouerbetrokkenheid is egter die een aspek van suksesvolle skole wat nie so maklik bestuur kan word nie. Ouers se persepsie van ouerbetrokkenheid verskil van die skoolbestuur en onderwyser se persepsie van ouerbetrokkenheid.

Die doel van die studie is dus eerstens om vas te stel wat ouers se persepsie van ouerbetrokkenheid in 'n kwintiel vyf laerskool is. Tweedens, om te bepaal wat onderwysers se persepsie van ouerbetrokkenheid in 'n kwintiel vyf laerskool is en derdens te bepaal hoe ouerbetrokkenheid manifesteer in die beleide van die Nasionale Onderwys Departement, Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement en drie kwintiel vyf laerskole.

Om hierdie doelwit te bereik is onderhoude gevoer met twintig graad-ses ouers, van drie verskillende kwintiel vyf laerskole. Die onderwysers het vraelyste ingevul en 'n studie is gemaak van die beleide van die verskillende onderwysdepartemente en kwintiel vyf skole. Beide 'n kwalitatiewe metode, naamlik onderhoude en kwantitatiewe metode naamlik vraelyste is gebruik ten einde die doelwit te bereik. Voorts is Kritiese Teorie toegepas om individue en rolspelers te bevry van ongemaklike situasies wat moontlik kan ontstaan, weens 'n verskil in persepsies.

Nadat 'n uitgebreide studie van bestaande literatuur gedoen is, onderhoude en vraelyste geanaliseer is, en beleide bestudeer is, is bevind dat ouers se persepsie van betrokkenheid berus hoofsaaklik op ondersteuning vir hul kinders en kommunikasie vanaf die skool. Onderwysers voel ook dat betrokkenheid ondersteuning behels, kommunikasie belangrik is, maar dat ouerbetrokkenheid bestuur moet word. Die bestuur gedeelte dui grootliks daarop dat onderwysers betrokkenheid as negatief kan ervaar. Die tyd het dus ryg geword dat ouerbetrokkenheid gesien moet word as ouer-ondersteuning en nie as ouerbetrokkenheid nie.

**SLEUTELWOORDE:** Ouers, persepsie, beleid, ouer betrokkenheid, kwintiel vyf laerskool.

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## **DEDICATION**

Vir Suzaan, Edrich en Cara.



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Parent involvement has long been part of the school -parent relationship. The way in which this relationship manifest in schools vary from school to school. Each school has its own reasons for requesting parents to get involved in their child's education. Requesting parents in a quintile five primary school to get even more involved in different school based involvement opportunities may leave parents asking questions such as how much is enough and how do we get involved? Parents can even argue that they are more than involved in their child's education, but perhaps not in the same way as the school perceive involvement.

Also, the teacher's perception, in a quintile five primary, school may differ from that of the parent. For instance, the teacher may argue that if the parent is not visible at school for any reason, the parent is an uninvolved parent. Furthermore teachers may argue that the parents in a quintile five primary school do have the time, resource and that the school's program lends itself to sustained parent-teacher contact. These initial differences in perceptions of parental involvement may lead to parents and teachers misunderstanding each other regarding parental involvement.

Whose perception is the correct one or the wrong one is not the argument. The notion that parents and teachers have different views and perceptions of parental involvement is a certainty. Setting perceptions aside, what matters at the end is that both parent and teacher must attempt to understand each other's point of view regarding parental involvement. Understanding what is important to both, and looking at each other's point of view may pave the way for working together more closely regarding involvement, thereby creating an environment where parent and teacher can put their similar points of view together. This mutual understanding may end speculation on who is an involved or uninvolved parent and consequently encourage teachers to have a better understanding of parents' perception of involvement.

In this chapter I will elaborate on the context of my research as well as the theoretical points of departure and the research methods I shall employ.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

I am a Deputy Principal and a grade six teacher and have taught at four different quintile five primary schools for the past twenty years. During this twenty years, I have observed that each of these four quintile five primary schools were associated with being highly effective thus accumulating high scores in the Western Cape Education, Whole School Evaluation Program. Furthermore, the one aspect that stood out for me the most is that each of these four quintile five primary schools has a high percentage of parent involvement.

In the quintile five primary schools I have taught, Sammons (1996:12) describes and provides reasons why these schools are so effective. Sammons (1996:12) lists them as professional leadership, shared visions and goals, a learning environment, concentrating on teaching and learning, purposeful learning, high expectation, positive reinforcement, monitoring progress, pupils rights and responsibilities, home school partnerships and learning organization. In addition, Lezotte (1991:1-6) also list the determinants as that of a safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations for success, instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn and student time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress and home school relations.

Thus, taking all Sammons' and Lezotte's determinates in consideration, the two determinates that I observed as being the most influential reasons for parents being involved, is high expectations from parents, and the right and responsibilities of the learner and the parent. For me, this high expectation from the quintile five parent community forms the basis for a high percentage of parental involvement. Subsequently, creating opportunities to fulfill these high expectations of parents are part of the quintile five primary school's yearly objectives and usually forms part of the school's ethos.

Beghetto (2001:4) strengthens this notion of parents' expectation, by adding that the schools with the most successful parent involvement programs are those which offer a variety of ways parents can participate. Furthermore, by recognizing that parents differ greatly in their willingness, ability, availability and available time for involvement in school activities, these quintile five primary schools provide a variety of options for parent participation. Schools also implement policies in providing such a variety for parent participation (Beghetto 2001:4).

However, in my experience most of Sammons's (1996:12) and Lezotte's (1991:1) determinates are effective managed, in a quintile five primary school, from the Headmaster's office or by means of the School Management Team. One determinant that is not as uncomplicated managed is that of parental involvement. Different perceptions from parents and School Management Teams on what parental involvement is, creates a situation where the high expectations from parents are not always met. It is thus important for the School Management Team to know what parents' perceptions of parental involvement are so that the School Management Team can understand why the parents have this high expectations and further increasing the effective management of parental involvement in quintile five primary schools.

On the contrary, when taking the importance of parent involvement in mind, past studies of parent involvement has been looked at from the teachers' and administrators' perception but has not really been studied through the eyes of the parents (Ladner 2006:2). Furthermore, Ladner (2006:2) found that research is absent on comparing and contrasting parents' and teachers' perception of parental involvement. Teachers and students have been interviewed and surveyed to see what they perceive as parental involvement. Out of all these studies looking at different aspects of parental involvements, the parents are very seldom questioned about their perception of involvement (Ladner 2006:2). Furthermore, Barge and Loges (2003:140) quickly adds that little research has explored whether parent, student, and teacher perceptions are similar regarding what constitutes as parental involvement.

Subsequently, Epstein (2002:25) developed a framework of Six Types of Parent involvement. Although, still from an academic perception, I will use this frame work as the theoretical basis, back ground and starting point of my study.

TYPE 1: PARENTING: Supporting, nurturing and child rearing.

Families establish home environments to support children as students.

TYPE 2: COMMUNICATING: relating, reviewing and overseeing.

Design effective form of school to home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

TYPE 3: VOLUNTEERING: Supervising and fostering.

Recruit and organize parent help and support.

TYPE 4: LEARNING AT HOME: Managing, recognizing and rewarding.

Provide information and ideas families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum - related activities, decision to and planning.

TYPE 5: DECISION MAKING: contributing, considering and judging.

Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

TYPE 6: COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Sharing and giving.

Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

When I take everything in consideration, Begotte (2001:4) arguing that parental involvement is important for being an effective school, Epstein (2002:25) designing a framework for parental involvement and Ladner (2006:2) and Barges and Logy (2003:140) indicate that comparative studies regarding parental involvement is rather absent, the aim of my study is to identify what the parents' perception of parental involvement in the quintile five primary school is.

The focus of my study is not to engage in what constitutes as being involved and or lack of involvement. Numerous studies on this topic, for instance Mncube (2010), Lemmer & van Wyk (2004) and Patel & Corter (2013) have been done. Overcoming barriers to parent involvement and promoting involvement are also not scrutinize because of, again, numerous studies done by researchers such as Hamilton & Osborne and Snell, Miguel & East and Robinson & Hunt (1999).

My study will further more engage in qualitative research method using interviews. In my pursuit to find the parent's voice on parent involvement, I will interview twenty parents from

three different quintile five primary schools. Also, data constructed from surveys, completed by six grade six teachers will be used to compare answers with that of the parents', by means of a questionnaire end triangulation. Additionally, national-, provincial – and school based policy, will be scrutinize to see how parents' and teachers' perception of involvement unpack in practice.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION**

The research is situated in the parents' perception of parent involvement in the quintile five primary school. Parents perceive involvement in schools in very different ways. These perceptions may also differ from what teachers perceive as parental involvement. This is a phenomenon I want to thoroughly explore in my research.

#### **The main research question stemming from this is:**

What is parents' perception of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school?

In additions, the following two **sub-questions** steer my research:

- Do parents and teachers in a quintile five primary school have the same perception of parental involvement?
- How does parent involvement manifest in different levels of education policy?

### **1.4 RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of this study is to determine what the parents' perception of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school is. Parents' perceptions of parental involvement will then be compared with that of the teachers' perception of involvement. Consequently comparative perceptions will be strengthened, and perceptions that differ can be improved to enhance dialogue between the school and parent community. These findings might then be utilized by the School Management Team, by means of using the accurate vocabulary and terminology, to better their communication with parents regarding parental involvement, and there by working towards an effective school.

## 1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives of the research are related to the research question:

1. Determine parents' perception of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school.
2. Determine teachers' perception of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school.
3. Scrutinize education policies on national, provincial and quintile five primary school levels, to comprehend how parent involvement policy untie on national, provincial and local education levels. Reaching this objective will ground my research as a policy analyses. Policies provide a framework, within which a range of implementation activities take place. Policies are, thus, narratives that provide: visions and principles; rules and regulations; frameworks for funding; governance; curriculum and assessment; qualifications and conditions of work for teachers. Therefore, insight into education policies reflects the broad social, economic and political contexts in which they are formed (Christie, 2008:149). Smith and Foster (2002:3) argue that policies are important, as they provide a vision of government policy on a given issue, and a statement of policy-in-intention; however, they are of little interest, unless they are followed by some form of legislative action. However, Elmore (in Cummings & McGinn, 1997:301) argues that policymaking toward education is primarily about agenda formation and enactment, rather than about implementation and sustained change in public institutions.

## 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The significance of the research is that if the school better understands what the parent's perception of involvement is, the school will be best equipped to address the needs, reasons and motivations parents have for being involved in a quintile five primary school. Also, if the parent has an understanding of the teacher's perception of parental involvement, the parent will also be equipped to understand the needs of the teacher in a quintile five primary school. This mutual understanding may enhance dialogue and the professional relationship between the parent and the teacher. Tied by a collective involvement goal, the parent and the teacher may form a stronger partnership to the advantage of all educational entities, i.e. parent, learner, teacher and the school.

## **1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATION TO THE STUDY**

The scope of the study includes twenty parents of grade six learners and six teachers, teaching in grade six, in three different, quintile five primary schools. Only parents and teachers in grade six were interviewed, because I have fifteen years of teaching experience in grade six classes. Also, as experienced by myself, grade six is a year in which the learners want to be more independent from their parent's involvement.

Quintile five primary schools has been chosen because, in the case of the three chosen quintile five primary schools, the numerous reasons for parents not being involved, are not as evident as in a lesser quintile school. This rationale does, however, not imply that lesser quintile schools have less parental involvement than a quintile five primary school.

Some limitations to the study are the use of a qualitative research design method. The data were constructing by means of a semi structured interview and questionnaire. This method of study tends to work with relatively small number of cases (Silverman 2000). Furthermore Silverman (2000) states that qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for detail. It is because of this notion that I only interviewed a small number of parents and only a few teachers were completing the questionnaire.

Furthermore, a school that was requested to take part in the interview refused, reasoning that doing interviews regarding parental involvement is a sensitive matter. By not allowing the study, it may be that parental involvement studies in that particular quintile five primary school may pose as a risk. The Headmaster, though, was in favor of academic research studies, being an academic himself

## **1.8 INTRODUCTION TO KEY CONCEPTS**

The four major concepts in this study are parents, perception, parental involvement and quintile five primary schools.

### 1.8.1 Parent

In the capacity of education, a parent will be defined in terms of the South African Schools act no. 84 of 199 as amended in Act No. 15 of 2011 as:

- a) The biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a learner.
- b) The person legally entailed to custody of a learner; or
- c) The person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a person referred to in (a) Or (b), above, towards the learner's education at school.

(c) The substitution in subsection (1) for paragraph (a) of the definition of “parent” of the following paragraph:

“(a) the biological or adoptive *parent* or legal guardian of a *learner*.”

### 1.8.2 Perception

Perception, according to Kendra Cherry is our sensory experience of the world around us and involves both the recognition of environmental stimuli and actions in response to these stimuli. Through the perceptual process, we gain information about properties and elements of the environment that is critical to our survival. Perception not only creates our experience of the world around us; it allows us to act within our environment.

In his article, the issue of perception: some educational implications (UNISA), Lewis writes about the perceiver, or the parent, and perception in the situational context. The situational context, being that of involvement in child's educational environment.

The perceiver has certain characteristics which can modify perception. Randolph and Blackburn (1989:76) identify three such factors, namely that which the perceiver previously learnt, as well as well as the motivation and personality of the perceiver, while Coren *et al.* (1999: 532) see psychological, gender as well as personality and cognitive differences as contributing to difference in perception. Trevor Heath adds that the interpretation of a perceptual stimulus is influenced by previously - learned knowledge, intellectual skills and cognitive strategies, and by the persons mental set.

The reason for having such diverse perceptions of parental involvement may sprout from the numerous different combinations of factors, each containing different aspects and therefore resulting in uncountable different perceptions of involvement.

Lewis ends by giving guidelines and recommendations in order for educational practitioners and researchers to be more aware of others' thoughts and actions. These are some of them regarding the research purpose of this paper:

- Educational stakeholders should be understanding and sensitive to others' points of view.
- Perceptions are dynamic and people should realize that previously held and current perceptions that were seen as correct may be changed due to the emergences of new and valid information.
- Several factors are responsible for differences in perception and an understanding and sensitivity to these factors should be borne in mind when interpreting others' thinking and behavior.

Perception is thus formed by the personality, previous experiences and motivations of the parent. All three of these aspects have emerged in the parent's interviews, there by linking their perception to their involvement.

### 1.8.3 Parental involvement

The appeal of parental involvement as part of a remedy for school education has been strong in education as a whole, however, there remain some thorny issues related to research on parental involvement, because of the research findings have been somewhat inconsistent, according to Fan and Chen (2001:1) Despite the intuitive meaning, the operational use of parental involvement has not been clear and persistent. Fan and Chan (2001:4) define parental involvement in practice as representing many different parental behaviors and parental aspirations for their children's academic achievement and their conveyance of such practices to their children.

Epstein did a research in 1992 on three topics namely the importance of family environments and involvement, the importance of school environments for influencing family involvement and effects of school family- family partnerships on students, parents and teachers.

In 1996 Georgiou conducted research on a definition for parental involvement as it then already was a popular issue that kept both practitioners and theoreticians busy in the field of education. Although popular, the concept of parent involvement was still vague and its outcomes unclear.

Tying together above mentioned thoughts, Epstein and Saunders (2002:20) states that there is rather some confusion and disagreement about which practices and how to obtain high participation. Furthermore, Hill and Tyson (2009:761) define parental involvement as parents' interaction with school and with their children to promote academic success. Today the most widely cited amongst existing frameworks is Epstein's (Epstein & Sanders 2002:25) which divides parental involvement in school based and home based activities. Consequently, when I take all of above in consideration one can rather ask whose perceptions of parental involvement were taken in consideration?

#### 1.8.4 Quintile five primary school

In section 35 of the South African Schools Act of 1996, Norms and standards for school funding, The Minister must determine national quintiles for public schools and national norms and standards for school funding after consultation with the Council of Education ministers and the Minister of finance.

The norms and standards for school funding contemplated must -

- (a) Set out a criteria for the distribution of state funding to all public schools in fair and equitable manner,
- (b) Provide a system in terms of which learners at all public schools can be placed into quintiles, referred to as national quintiles for learners, according to financial means.

(c) Provide for a system in terms of which all public schools in the Republic can be placed into quintiles reoffered to as national quintiles for public schools, according to the distributions of learners in the national quintiles for learners.

(d) Determine the procedure in terms of which the Member of the Executive Council must apply the criteria contemplated in paragraph a.

[Section 35 substituted by s.3 of act No 24 of 2005.]

The quintile level is calculated on the schools socio- economic circumstances as determined by Statistics South Africa based on disadvantaged circumstances and poverty (2008). Quintiles are also used to determine which schools may charge school fees and which schools are no school fee schools. Thus, the quintiles differentiate between the amounts of funding allocated to different schools based on a pro poverty scale (Gunda 2010).

Furthermore, due to problems arising from parents' difficulties to pay school fees; the Minister of Education amended the South African Schools act to implement a no school fee policy. (Cube 2009). This no school fee policy is underwritten by Section 39, subsection 7 which confirms that the Minister of Education must by notice in the Government Gazette annually determine the national quintiles for public schools or part of such quintiles which must be used by the Member of the Executive council to identify schools that may not charge school fees. Subsequently, schools in quintile one to three do not raise school fees. Quintile four and five schools do raise school fees (Grant 2012).

In response to a question posed by Mr. JJ Gunda if the quintile system are going to be revised the Minister of Education, Minister Motshekga positively answered that the suitability of system is going to be revised. (Gunda 2010:1). Another system to be implemented is the even funding of schools in quintile one to quintile five. The classifying of schools is also going to be revised (Gunda 2010:1).

## 1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

In **Chapter two** the research design and methodology will be discussed posing the research question. The research methodology and research method will be discussed focusing on the semi structured interview.

In **Chapter three** a literature review, is conducted about parent's perception of parental involvement. An attempt is made to review the literature to develop a better understanding of what parent perception of parental involvement in a primary school is. This orientation may help to explore dissertations relating to parental involvement on a local, national and global stage.

In **Chapter four** the different policies of the Department of Basic Education, Western Cape Education Department and a quintile five primary school will be scrutinized to see how policies on parental involvement, manifests on the three different levels.

**Chapter five** will focus on the semi structured interview schedule. The interview respondents, namely the parents, teachers will be discussed. The interview questions will be set out. Analyses of the interviews will be done regarding parents perception of involvement on parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community.

In **Chapter six** the results of the study are considered and the findings on parents' perception of parental involvement in quintile five primary schools are being discussed. The findings are discussed in relation to the literature review, the analyses of policies and the interviews that have been conducted. Furthermore, recommendations for future studies, a summary of chapters, conclusion and references will be added.

## 1.10 SUMMARY

In this introduction chapter the back ground, research question, aims, objectives, significance and limitations of the research were discussed. Furthermore key concepts were introduced and a

summary of the chapters has been done. In Chapter two a literature review on parental involvement will be conducted to dissect academic literature to arrive at a conclusive understanding of parental involvement.

It is clear that a definition of parental involvement is not as simple as the concept implies. These different definitions, adding parents with different personalities, experiences and motivations make it all clearer that different involvement perceptions will arise.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I will set the research question, outline the research methodology and discuss the research methods. I argue that the parents are not always given the opportunity to raise their voices when parental involvement is being researched. I will thus construct data on parents' perception by means of a semi-structured interview. Data on teachers' perception of parental involvement will also be constructed by means of a questionnaire. I will also scrutinize the relevant policies of the Department of Basic Education, the Western Cape Education Department and quintile five primary school's policy on parental involvement, to see how parental involvement manifests in each of these role players' policies.

Drawing from my experience, I believe, that when one listens to and merely attempt to understand both the parents' and teachers' perception of parental involvement, both parent and teacher can be emancipate from a possible situation of misunderstanding. Therefor this research will be based on critical theory in an attempt to enhance teacher and parent dialogue. In addition, methodology triangulation will be use to validate the parents' perception with that of the teachers' perception of parental involvement.

Data constructed from the parents interviews and teachers questionnaires will be analyzed according to Epstein's (2002:12) framework of parental involvement. Each of the questions will add further insight to Epstein's framework (2002:12) of parental involvement.

#### **2.2 RESEARCH QUESTION**

My research question relates to the perception parents have of parental involvement in the quintile five primary school. Parents may perceive their involvement in quintile five primary schools in many different ways. I will endeavor to consolidate all of these perceptions by interviewing the parents on what their perceptions of parental involvement are. These

perceptions may also differ, or be complimented by teachers perception of parental involvement. This is a phenomenon I want to thoroughly explore in my research.

Thus, the **main research question** stemming from this is:

**What are the parents' perceptions of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school?**

In additions, the following two **sub-questions** steer my research:

- What are the teachers' perceptions of the parents' involvement in the quintile five primary school?
- How does relevant parental involvement policies manifest in the Department of Basic Education, the Western Cape Education Department, and three quintile five primary schools?

## **2.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study I shall use the qualitative methodology. The characteristics of the qualitative research are grounded in its aims. The aims of qualitative methodology relate to understanding some aspect of social life and its methods which generate words as data, interviews for example, for analysis according to Quinn, Patton and Cochran (2000:4).

Specific focus will be on Critical Theory. By far the most important dimension of critical inquiry is the fact that it is driven by emancipator interest, that is, its purpose is to contribute to change in people's understanding of themselves and their practices, thus freeing them from societal constraints(Carr & Kemmis, 1986:197).

### **2.3.1 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative methods can address information such as people's emotions, perceptions and barriers. Furthermore, Quinn, Patton and Cochran (2000:13) states qualitative research make it possible to

understand the perspective, or perception in this study, of the participant, to explore the meaning they give to a phenomenon or to observe a process in depth.

Adding to Patton and Cochran (2000:4), Gubrium and Holstein states that qualitative research is also referred to as an emotionalist model in contrasting to quantitative research. Using a qualitative research approach, I will focus on meaning and emotion. The aim is to gain parents' insight and perception and the preferred method to construct data to reach this aim is by means of an open ended interview according to Silvermann (2000:11). Therefore I will use a qualitative approach in my study by constructing data on parents' perception of parental involvement by means of a semi-structured interview. Thus, reflecting the strong tradition in qualitative research by prioritizing the study of emotions, meaning and, as far as my study concerns, perception (Silvermann, 2000:10).

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### **2.3.2 CRITICAL THEORY**

I shall collect relevant data from specified sources to analyze material and arrive at a more complete understanding of the different perceptions of parents' perception in a quintile five primary school.

Critical theory aims to provide a comprehensive perspective of society. (Gibson, 2007) This perspective of society becomes evident in the literature review. Thus, the operation, or study for this matter, is critical because it gives an evaluation of a specific state of affairs (Biesta, 2001: 127). The state of affairs are exploited in the quintile five primary schools by means of analysing and evaluating the data constructed in the semi -structured interviews. In addition, it is not to destroy relations between role players in education, but to affirm what is excluded (Biesta, G 2001:135), thus the perception parents have of parental involvement.

Also, critical inquiry strives to engender self-reflective activity amongst individuals, in order to bring about a clear articulation of arguments in an atmosphere of openness, so as to overcome ideological distortions generated within social relations and institutions (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:162). The adoption of a critical approach to education policy research is aimed at generating critical action in others and at giving rise to conditions intended to replace one distorted set of practices with another, hopefully less distorted, set of practices (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:197).

## **2.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study triangulation methodology will manifest in the qualitative methodology, by means of interviewing parents, and a quantitative approach by which teachers fill out a questionnaire. Consequently, I will validate the perception parents have of parental involvement with that of the teacher's perception.

### **2.4.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

I will attempt to tie the research methodology to the research method that I am using, by means of Silvermann's (2000:111) explanation on semi-structured interviews. According to Silvermann (2000:111), the first method to be used is a semi-structured interview, posing open ended questions to small samples and the second method will be to analyse transcripts to understand how participants organize their talks and, in this study, perceptions (Silvermann 2000:111). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted on the basis of a loose structure, topic guided made up of twelve open ended questions defining the area to be explored (Quinn, Patton and Cochran 2002:12). I will compile a list of key questions, forthcoming in the literature.

Characteristics of a semi-structured interview are that, according to Mason (2007:424) they have a flexible and fluid structure, which contains a structured sequence of questions to be asked in the same way to all interviewees. However the disadvantages of a semi-structured interview, according to Pring (2000:39), range from practical implications to philosophical implications.

Practical implications are that the studies can only be of interest to those who undertakes the semi-structured interview. It can also be on a small scale and fragmented to serve policies and professional interest. The philosophical concern that of subjectivity and objectivity are also raised by Pring (2000:40). The researcher has his or her own beliefs and the responses must be able to sieve through the beliefs of the researcher (Pring 2000:40). This notion is strengthened when taking critical theory's central debate in consideration that the researcher has the potential to represent or misrepresent the researched by turning them into objects, ultimately representing the researched only as categories of the research (Gibson 2007:145).

I will conduct interviews rooted in the literature that will act as a guide for the questions of the semi-structured interviews. Interviews are planned with each participant in order to provide more in depth data collection and opportunities to follow up.

My sample will include both parents and teachers. Twenty grade six parents of three different quintile five primary schools will be interviewed. The choice of schools are based on the schools' quintile five status as set out by the Government and conceptualized in Chapter One. Parents were randomly chosen from those who gave their consent to assist with the interview process. Six grade six teachers completed a questionnaire with four questions.

I will then analyze the interview answers according to Epstein's six levels of parental involvement. Each interview question slots into one of the six levels. The parents' questions are based on home and school orientated perspective, because the parents are situated in both aspects of the learner's schooling environment.

#### **2.4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE**

Six teachers, 2 of each school will fill out a questionnaire. They will only answer four questions. The four questions will be the same as that of the parents' questions. The reason why the teachers only answers four questions, instead of twelve as the parents, is that the teachers will only complete questions that are focused on school based involvement.

The teachers' answers will be used to validate the parents' answers by means of triangulation. The differences and similarities in teachers' and parents' perceptions will then be analyzed. This analyzing process of identifying differences and similarities will also enhance better communication between parents and teachers. Each role player will have a better understanding of each other's perceptions, thus positively influence the teacher parent relationship. This understanding of different teacher and parents perceptions regarding parental involvement will also help the School Management Team to better their work ways regarding parental involvement. Thus, further strengthen the effectiveness of the quintile five primary school.

### **2.4.3 TRIANGULATION**

Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2002:1) differentiate between five different types of triangulations namely data-, investigator-, theory-, methodological- and environmental triangulation. For this study, I will use methodology triangulation. Methodology triangulation is described as the combination of multiple methods to gather data, such as documents, interviews, observations, questionnaires or surveys, when conducting primary research at different times in different places. (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2002:1). I will use triangulation which will increase the confidence in the consequential findings according to Bryman (2004:1).

### **2.4.4 CRITICAL ANALYSES OF EDUCATION POLICIES**

I will scrutinize the relevant policies on parental involvement. The policy of the Department of Basic Education, Western Cape Education Department and a quintile five primary school will be scrutinized to come to a better understanding on how parental involvement manifests in the policies of these education role players. Critical Theory tries to liberate role players and consequently come to a solution to a problem, thereby emancipate different role players.

### **2.4.5 ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT DATA CONSTRUCTED FROM INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES**

I will analyze the findings made from the data constructed from the parents' interviews and the teachers' questionnaires. This data will be compared with that of Epstein's framework of parental involvement. (2002:15). Epstein's framework will be discussed in chapter 3.

## **2.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter the research method and methodology were discussed. The use of a qualitative research methodology makes it possible for this research to burrow deeper into a better understanding of the parents' perception of parental involvement. This constructing of data will be done by means of a semi-structured interview. There by, ultimately, emancipating both parent and teacher from a possible point of misunderstanding on what constitutes as parental involvement.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will do a review of available literature regarding parents' perception of parental involvement. This literature review will be based on Boote and Beile's article *Scholars before researchers*, (2005) and deriving from above mentioned article, I will focus on different aspects of a literature review.

First, I will review relevant literature regarding definitions of parental involvement, reasons and ways in which parents are getting involved at the school, and parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. Secondly, I will revisit Epstein's framework of parental involvement (2002:15). In doing so, I will ground the theoretical part of my study. This theoretical framework forms the boundaries of my study. Interviews done in my study will be compared the results of my interview to that of Epstein's framework of parental involvement.

The third aspect to cover, in accordance with Boote and Beiles's (2005:5) article, that is, to identify research techniques used in the field of parental involvement research. Consequently, I will dissect the research techniques used by researchers in constructing data on research done on parental involvement. By dissecting these research techniques, I will endeavor to strengthen Ladner's statement (2006:2) that not enough qualitative interviews are done by researchers on parental involvement. Finally, I will try to articulate existing variables taking place in the literature field of parental involvement.

#### 3.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Boote and Beile advocate the use of definitions to articulate concepts in literature. However. Critical Theory are not bind by definitions, consequently will I not blindly accept the definitions of parental involvement as stipulated in literature.

According to Trivette and Anderson (1995:300) is it difficult to generalize across studies what the definition of parental involvement is because researchers have used different conceptualizations of parental involvement and according to Georgiou (1997:190) we do not really even now what the real definition is. However, it appears that most definitions of parental involvement fall under four major categories: (a) parental academic aspirations and expectations for children (Bloom, 1980; Keith, 1991; Walberg, 1986), (b) participation in school activities and programs (Epstein, 1984b; Walberg, 1984b), (c) home structure that supports learning (Uguroglu & Walberg, 1986), and (d) communication with children about school (Keith, 1991; Walberg, 1986) in Trivette and Anderson(1995:300.)

In addition, four theories guide research and practice according to Grolnic and Slowiaczek (1994:239.) Each of these theories conceptualizes parental involvement in education as a multi-dimensional construct. These four theories Grolnic and Slowiaczek state are communication between families and school, parental involvement in education at school, volunteering and parental involvement at home helping with homework. Crolnick and Slowiaczek (1995:238) also define parental involvement as the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within in a certain domain. Crolnick and Slowiaczek (1995:238) explain that such a definition recognizes that there is a difference between parents' overall involvement with the child and involvement with the child's education.

Hill adds (2009:1) that parental involvement in education and family-school- relations are terms that have been used interchangeably. Hill (2009:1) furthermore distinguish between family school relations that are often conceptualize as the interaction between family communication and schools, affecting the academic progress of students, academic or behavioral problems and expectations for home engagement.

Hill *et al.* (2004:161) also describe that parent involvement in education has been defined as parent's interaction with school and with their children to promote academic success. Hill (2009:2) goes even further and states that such interactions between home and school extend beyond the engagement with schools, to home life and the expectations and values for education that are communicated directly and indirectly to children.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997:67) put forth what appears to be a comprehensive theoretical framework about parental involvement. Their theoretical conceptualization about parental involvement focuses on three main issues: (1) why parents become involved in their children's education, (2) how parents choose specific types of involvement, and (3) why parental involvement has positive influence on students' education outcomes.

Joyce Epstein (2002) developed a comprehensive framework or definition of six types of parental involvement, which today forms the basis of numerous studies on parental involvement. I use Epstein's framework of parental involvement extensively in this study, firstly as a framework for my study and secondly as a guide for my interview questions. This framework will be discussed in length towards the end of this chapter three.

By only dissecting a small sample of articles, I merely venture that the definition of parental involvement are not easily defined. The reason for this, from my point of view, is that the lenses through which the interviewer looks must first be defined. Subsequently, when research is done on parents' perceptions, parents should be interviewed.

### **3.2.1 REASONS WHY PARENTS GET INVOLVED**

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:310), parents' decision to become involved is based on three general factors: (a) parents' beliefs that taking part in their children's learning is a part of their responsibility (i.e., parental role construction) and their evaluation of their capabilities in that regard (i.e., parenting self-efficacy), (b) parents' perception of invitations or demands from schools and teachers and from their children to be involved, and (c) demands on parents' time and energy that may conflict with involvement activities (e.g., caring for other children, extended family responsibilities, demanding or inflexible work schedules.)

In addition, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:327) created a model in which they describe why and how parents do get involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997:326) assert that the parent does have a choice to become involved or not. Thus, if the parent decides to become involved in the first place, the decision is influenced by the parent's construction of the parental

role, parent's sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed in school and general opportunities and demands for parental involvement presented by the parent's child and child's school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997:327).

The parents' decision to be involved, will lead to the parents' choice of involvement. The choice of involvement is influenced by specific domains of parents' skills and knowledge; mix with the demands on time and energy from other family and employment demands, and specific invitations and demands for involvement from children and school/teacher(s) (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997:327). The choice of involvement, again, will lead to the mechanism parents use to influence the child's outcomes. This mechanism are modeling, for example discussing schoolwork, volunteering, helping with school outings, and reinforcement, for example reinforcing school success and success related behaviors (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997:327)

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:326) states that parents get involved to enhance children's educational outcomes, primarily through the mechanism of modeling, reinforcement, and instructions as tempered or mediated by parents' choice of developmentally suitable involvement strategies and the fit between parental involvement activities and the school's expectation for their involvement.

**Table 1: The Parent's Child (ren) Child (ren)'s School: the Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995, 1997) Model of Parental Involvement**

<b>LEVEL 5: Child/Student Outcomes</b>	
Skills and Knowledge Efficacy for Doing Well in School	
<b>LEVEL 4: Tempering/Mediating Variables</b>	
Parents' Use of Developmentally Appropriate Involvement Strategies	Fit between Parents' Involvement Actions & School Expectations
<b>LEVEL 3: Mechanisms through which Parent Involvement Influences Child/Student Outcomes</b>	

Modeling      Reinforcement Instruction

Close-Ended    Open-Ended

**LEVEL 2: Parents' Choice of Involvement Forms**

Influenced by:

Specific Domains of Parents' Skills & Knowledge    Mix of Demands on Total Time & Energy  
from:    Specific Invitations and Demands for Involvement from:

Other Family Demands      Employment Demands      Child(ren)  
School/Teacher(s)

**LEVEL 1: Parental Involvement Decision**

(The Parent's Positive Decision to Become Involved) Influenced by:

Parent's Construction of the Parental Role    Parent's Sense of Efficacy for Helping Child(ren)  
Succeed in School    General Opportunities and Demands for Parental Involvement Presented by  
Hoover Dempsey and Sandler.

When literature are scrutinized, one may arrive at the conclusion that the perceptions parents have of parental involvement and reasons why parents do get involved at school, are based on personal choice, construct from their role as parents and believes. Thus, in my view one must not underestimate the role the school play by means of opportunities and communication, in defying the perception parents have of their involvement.

**3.2.2 WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS GET INVOLVED**

Literature readily defines between two ways of getting involved in their child's school environment. First way is school based involvement and secondly home based involvement.

School based activities include but is not limited to driving on a field trip, staffing a school booth at a play, attending school conference or informal conversation, volunteering and serving on the School Governing Body (Epstein2005:12). Ladner (2003:14) also adds volunteering at school, attending PTA meetings, attending parent teacher conferences, reading one on one in classrooms, helping with fundraising and communicating with the child's teacher.

Parent involvement at home is defined by Sheldon (2002:302) as parent-child interaction on school-related or other learning activities and represents the direct investment of parents' resources in his or her child's education. Again, Baker et al (1999:371) promotes home based parent activities that teachers believed promote children's skills and cognitive development and fosters for school success. They are: discussing the child with the teacher, shows respect for the school, discuss the school day with the child, oversees homework, help the child practices skills, write stories with the child, reads with the child, works on projects with the child, takes the child to the library, takes the child to cultural activities, monitors the child's television viewing, is interested in what happens at school, responds to notes sent home and facilitates transition to school. This might enhance the teacher's perception of an involved parent. (Baker et al 1999:371.)

Parents also include activities related to school, but they also mentioned that they were related to the community or home. Parents and teachers seemed to agree about the most commonly stated ways that parents are involved at home, which are helping reviewing homework, reading with or to their child, and talking to the child (Ladner 2003:33).

Ladner (2003:16) also adds that parent's involvements influence the child's development of literacy skills. Skills being that of checking homework, reading to and with their children, sharing time on the computer, trips to the library or bookstore, and simply discussing school with the child. One hundred percent of the teachers she surveyed agreed that parents involvement is critical but adding that the parents' perception was still not addressed.

Furthermore, parents put helping with homework, reading, math and knowing what their children was learning as the most important ways to be involved. However, studies by Ladner (2003:20)

suggest that parents often fall short of meeting the schools expectation for involvement. So, although these parents think these activities are important, the parents are not confirming that they are doing them according to Ladner (2003:20).

Home based involvement opportunities are thus created by the parent, thereby strengthening the teacher and the school. School based opportunities are created by teachers. Thus in my experience, if the school communicate to parents where, how and when to get involved, school based parental involvement will improve. Also, by telling parents what the school expect of them, parents will reinforce the values and mission the school has. This thought coincides with Knopf and Swick (2007:291) that what continues to be neglected is the importance of first establishing open lines of communication that facilitate the development of relationships that will enable these conversations to take place.

### **3.2.3 THE PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

In a study done by Barge & Loges (2007:144) on parents' perceptions of parental involvement four themes emerged regarding what characterises parental involvement: (a) monitoring student academic progress, (b) cultivating personal relationships with teachers, (c) utilizing extracurricular school programs, and (d) developing community support systems.

Parent beliefs about their part in their children's lives are an important element in their perception of what the parent-professional relationship should be. (Knopf and Swick (2007:293). It has thus become clear that the existence of a strong relationships between parents and their children's teachers significantly impact how parents feel about the care and education their child is receiving (Knopf & Swick 2007:292.) Parents think involvement in their child's learning is important according to Drummond and Stipek's, (2004:202.) Ladner (2003:12) is quick to add that parent involvement is also a necessity for a child to succeed and parent involvement means different things to different people (Ladner 2003:13.)

Lawson (2003:77) also agrees that teachers and parents have different perceptions of parental involvement. The reason for this is, according to Lawson (2003:77), that teachers and parents'

theories of involvement runs both parallel and in near opposition to each other, simultaneously. They are parallel because both parents and teachers are child focused. They are also nearly oppositional because teachers are school centric and parents' community centric frames of reference constantly put them at odds with each other.

Ladner (2003:33) states that parents tends to have a much broader view of parent involvement at home whereas teachers have a narrow view that typical includes activities that are directly related to school. The more parents perceived their child's teacher as valuing their contribution to their child's education, trying to keep them informed about their child's strengths and weaknesses, and providing them with specific suggestions to help their child, the higher the parents' involvement was both at home and at school (Patrikako 2000:104.) Also, parents' perceptions of involvement opportunities presented by their child's teacher significantly affected parent involvement both at school and at home. Parents who perceived that the school had a positive, inviting climate with teachers who were applying proactive strategies were less likely to report barriers to involvement (Patrikako 2000:106).

Thus, when parents perceived that teachers extended a partnership to them by keeping them informed and providing them with the necessary information to maximize participation in learning activities, the higher the involvement with their children schooling will be (Patrikako 2000:104.) In my experience, it might be that this partnership does not necessarily manifests at school by means of volunteering and attending, but that the parent are merely supporting the teacher at home and is monitoring the child's academic work at home.

Parents look at parent involvement with a broader scope. Parents and teachers both look at parental involvement in relationship to school but parents take it further and consider activities outside the school as equally important (Ladner 2003:7). One can argue that parents perceive their role in involvement simply as an extension of their role of raising children in contrast with the teacher's perceptions of seeing parent's involvement in school as the only important role for the parent to fulfill, school wise.

Ladner (2003:17) feels strongly that parents perception of involvement have almost been forgotten or left out altogether. It seems that parent's thoughts and opinions need to be looked at more closely to determine what parents see as important (Ladner 2003:17).

Parents often take their involvement cues directly from teachers. If they feel their child's teacher is trustworthy and cares about the students, they are more likely to be responsive to teacher-initiated interactions (Wright 2009:34.) Some parents view involvement as taking the lead in monitoring responsibilities at home while others view involvement as being actively involved at the school itself (Wright 2009:34). Other parents might see an active role in the school as disrespectful and a sign of a lack of confidence in the school itself (Wright 2009:34.)

I argue that parents may feel that parent involvement as seen from their perspective is not recognized by the school and teachers, leaving them disgruntled when asked to be more involved in school activities. Parents' perception of involvement does not necessary entail attending opportunities boasted by the school. Attending school events sprouts from being a devoted parent and not so much being involved in the school's organization. Parents will rather argue that by monitoring and supporting the child at home does not make their involvements less meaningful, but is also as important as volunteering at and attending school involvement opportunities.

### **3.2.4 THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Teacher's perception of parent involvement is so influential that teacher's expectations for students may be influenced by their perception of the parental expectations, there by changing the nature of their interaction with those students (Bakker *et al.* 2007:10). Teachers must thus be aware of the ideas parents have about parental involvement (Knopf & Swick 2007.)

Teachers tend to have a narrower view of parental involvement as being primarily school to home communication. This contrasts with the parents' broader view of the kinds of relationship and functions that needed to be performed, for example, attending parent programs, school activities, participating in school committees and acting as advocates for their child (Bakker 2007:11).

Consequently, teacher perception of parental involvement in educational home based activities have been found to be linked to those aspects of parental involvement which are more visible to teachers, such as participating in school based activities and other types of parent school and parent teacher contacts (Bakker 2007:12). Henceforth the perception teachers have that the higher the degree of participation and contact at school is, the higher the parental involvement in educational activities at home will be (Bakker 2007:13).

Teachers perceive parents with a higher level of education are typically judge as being more involved than parents with a lower education. Findings however acknowledge that parents with different level of education do not report different levels of involvement in the school careers of their children. Teachers appear to hold a rather stereotyped perception of the involvement of parents in their children education (Shung - Wing 2000; Stoep *et al.* 2002; Tett 2004) in Bakker 2007:13).

Teacher perception of parent and families are seemed to partially be influenced by demographic factors such as parent's education, socio economic status or marital status. Initial evidence indicate that other social demographic factors such as the age, gender, race, family structure and or mobility are critical in shaping teachers perceptions of parental involvement (Westerguard 2004:190).

Furthermore, perceptions that exist among many educators are that parents do not care about education (Knop & Swick 2007:291). This perception is often rooted in what teachers perceive parent involvement to be and teachers perception of what caring parents do, to support their child's education and class room functioning. Teachers perceive a lack of attendance at school functions as a sign of uncaring parents (Knop & Swick 2007:294). Additionally, teachers perceive that parents do not have the time or motivation to be involved (Epstein 1995 in Knopf & Swick 2007:294) and that parents are also not interested in leadership roles (Swick 2004b), but if we see parents as capable leaders we will achieve greater involvement.

According to Bakker (2007:14) positive teachers perceptions of different kinds of parental involvement that will help students do well in school are communication, participation, supervision, parenting and discipline. Teachers want parents to provide structure for homework including rewards and punishment, a place to work, and a time of day when this work should be done. One reason for this emphasis is that parents need to monitor their children's homework to make sure that it is completed and provide assistance when needed (Bakker 2007:214).

From my experience teachers tend to focus more on the visible side of parental involvement such as attending and volunteering and less on supporting and monitoring. Furthermore, an absent parent is not necessarily an uninvolved parent. One must not be mistaken that a parent that is not visible at school is not involved at all. The teacher in a quintile five primary school may experience parental involvement as negative. The challenge is thus to balance the different perception of parents and teachers there by supporting and trying to understanding each other's perception. The focus of the parent and teacher must be to work together with each other in sharing the same perception regarding involvement in the learners' school career. If the teacher accepts that monitoring and supporting at home is as important as attending and volunteering at school is a good way of starting to see each other's view.

### **3.3 JOYCE EPSTEIN'S FRAMEWORK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Joyce Epstein developed an extensive framework or definition for parental involvement. I will extensively use Joyce Epstein's framework of parental involvement as my theoretical departure and framework. The interview questions are based on each of the following. Each type is divided in a definition, sample practices, challenges, and expected results for students, parents and teachers. I am only going to refer to the definition, sample practices and results for parents, as this is a study on parents' perceptions of parental involvement. The results for teachers are also discussed because, by means of triangulation, the results of the parents' interviews are measured against that of the questionnaires filled out by teachers.

## Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement:

### **3.3.1 TYPE 1: PARENTING**

Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

#### Sample Practices

- Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
- Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child rearing at each age and grade level.
- Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy.)
- Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services.
- Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school.

#### Results for Parents

- Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school.
- Awareness of own and others' challenges in parents.
- Feeling of support from school and other parents.

#### Results for Teachers

- Understanding families' background, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children.
- Respect for families' strengths and efforts.
- Understanding of student diversity.
- Awareness of own skills to share information on child development.

### **3.3.2 TYPE 2: COMMUNICATING**

Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

#### Sample Practices

- Conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed.
- Language translators to assist families as needed.
- Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments.
- Parent/student pickup of report card, with conferences on improving grades.
- Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications.
- Clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs, and activities within schools.
- Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions.

#### Results for Parents

- Understanding school programs and policies.
- Monitoring and awareness of child's progress.
- Responding effectively to students' problems.
- Interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers.

#### Results for Teachers

- Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly
- Appreciation for and use of parent network for communications.
- Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress.

### **3.3.3 TYPE 3: VOLUNTEERING**

Recruit and organize parent help and support.

#### Sample Practices

- School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents.
- Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families.
- Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.

- Class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information.
- Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs.

#### Results for Parents

- Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carry-over of school activities at home.
- Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education.
- Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school.
- Gains in specific skills of volunteer work.

#### Results for Teachers

- Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school.
- Awareness of parents' talents and interests in school and children.
- Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers.

### **3.3.4 TYPE 4: LEARNING AT HOME**

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

#### Sample Practices

- Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.
- Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments.
- Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class.
- Calendars with activities for parents and students at home.
- Family math, science, and reading activities at school.
- Summer learning packets or activities.

- Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

#### Results for Parents

- Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year.
- Discussions of school, classwork, and homework.
- Understanding of instructional program each year and of what child is learning in each subject.
- Appreciation of teaching skills.
- Awareness of child as a learner.

#### Results for Teachers

- Better design of homework assignments.
- Respect for family time.
- Recognition of equal helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning.
- Satisfaction with family involvement and support.

### **3.3.5 TYPE 5: DECISION MAKING**

Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

#### Sample Practices

- Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g. curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation.
- Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements.
- District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement.
- Information on school or local elections for school representatives.
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives.

#### Results for Parents

- Input into policies that affect child's education.
- Feeling of ownership of school.
- Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions.

- Shared experiences and connections with other families.
- Awareness of school, district, and state policies.

#### Results for Teachers

- Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions.
- View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles.

### **3.3.6 TYPE 6: COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY**

Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

#### Sample Practices

- Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services
- Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.
- Service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations; and businesses.
- Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others).
- Participation of alumni in school programs for students.

#### Results for Parents

- Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services
- Interactions with other families in community activities.
- Awareness of school's role in the community and of community's contributions to the school.

#### Results for Teachers

- Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction.
- Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment teaching practices.

- Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services.

### 3.4 RESEARCH METHODS USED IN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT RESEARCH

This section deals with Boote and Beiles's (2005:5) remark, that is, to identify main methodologies and research techniques used in the field of parental involvement research. Consequently, I will dissect the techniques used by researchers I used in my literature review. By dissecting these techniques, I will endeavor to strengthen Ladner's statement (2003:17) that not enough qualitative interviews are done by parental involvement researchers and thereby attempt to validate my qualitative method, which is interviewing, of research. Hill (2004:163) poses the question on who should be surveyed when assessing parental school involvement. Is it the parents, teachers or students?

Dissecting the resources only used in my study I made the following findings. Questionnaires were used by, Crolick and Slowaicek (1994), Trivette and Anderson (1995) Crozier (1999), Ladner (2003), Bakker (2007) and Mncube (2010). Furthermore, studies on existing literature were done by Fan and Chen (1991) Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997, 1995) Lezotte (2001), Knopf and Swick (2006) and Anderman (2009). Focus group studies were done by Barge and Loges (2003), and surveys were done by Patrikakou and Weissberg (2008) and Sheldon (2002). In these studies not many interviews were conducted.

Interestingly enough, studies based on existing literature were done mostly after 2000 and questionnaires were done mostly before 2000. The most comprehensive studies on existing literature was done in 2001 by Fan and Chen *Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis* and by Jeynes (2007) *The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Urban Secondary School Student Academic Achievement: A meta analyses*.

Fan and Chen (2001:5) initially identified some 2 000 articles, papers or reports spanning more than a ten-year period. These were either published (e.g., in journals and as book chapters) or unpublished (e.g., conference presentations, technical reports). The number of articles was

eventually narrowed down to 25 by means of their inclusion theory (2001:5). Jeynes' (2007) meta-analysis cites 55 articles hosted on SAGE Journals Online and High Wire Press platforms.

A meta-analysis is an approach to estimating how much one treatment differs from another, over a large set of similar studies, along with the associated variability. An additional advantage of meta-analysis is that moderator variables can be investigated to explore more detailed relationships that may exist in the data. (Bernard and Abrami et al 2004:384)

Fan and Chen (2001:2) argues that the reason for fragmented researched in parental involvement for quite some time was, because limited empirical research has been conducted without the benefits of a guiding theoretical framework. This, according to Fan and Chen (2001:2) appears to be changing, because several promising theoretical frameworks for parental involvement have appeared for instance Epstein (1987, 1992, and 1994).

I argue that so many studies have been done regarding parental involvement that it may lead to the perception that researchers has collected enough data before 2000. Therefore, taking Fen and Chan (2001:5) and Jeynes (2007) studies in perspective, is it might not be necessary to do more research on parental involvement, because so much information can be analyzed from existing literature.

### **3.5 VARIABLES**

According to Patrikako (2008:111) the issue of parent perception and involvement is especially important in urban areas. Parent's perception was the only variable that was statistically significant in predicting parent involvement both at home and at school. This finding is important because it emphasize once again how crucial school factors are as reinforcing agents of parent's behavior. Also, when predicting parent involvement at school, parent perception of teacher outreach was once again the most influence variable. Parents who perceived teachers as extending a helpful hand as well as encouraging parents to visit the school were more likely to participate in a variety of school activities ( Patrikako 2008:111).

Hoover and Dempsey (1995:323) add that variables examined are primarily dynamic in character, that is they are realistically open to growth and change over the period of a parents own adult development. All are influenced by the characters in the involvements process: parents and their children. Elementary and secondary schools cannot realistically hope to alter a student's family status but schools may hope to influence selected parental process variables in the direction of increased parental involvement. The dynamic variables implicit in parents perception and behavior choices related to involvement may help us understand precisely why parents make their involvement choices according to Hoover and Dempsey (1995:329). Hoover and Dempsey (1995:324) suggest that the two major variables are the parents' selection of appropriate involvement strategies and activities and the schools expectation for parental involvement.

### **3.6 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FOR THIS STUDY**

Using Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement as the methodology frame work for my study and I constructed my interview questions as follows:

#### **TYPE 1: PARENTING**

- What motivates you to become involved with the school?
- How do your personal circumstances determine your involvement at school?
- What is your attitude towards parent involvement at school?
- Does your parental involvement at school influence your child's success?
- What is your perception of parental involvement?

#### **TYPE 2: COMMUNICATING**

- Is it important to be visible at school?

#### **TYPE 3: VOLUNTEERING**

- Does the school attitude in terms of parent involvement influence your participation?

**TYPE 4: LEARNING AT HOME**

- How will you describe your involvement at home - supportive or monitoring?
- Which involvement is most important - home or school involvement?
- Does your parental involvement at home influence your child's success at school?

**TYPE 5: DECISION MAKING**

- How would you describe your involvement at school - supportive, monitoring, voluntarily or managerial?

**TYPE 6: COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY**

- How would you describe your involvement at school - supportive, monitoring, voluntarily or managerial?

**3.7 SUMMARY**

The literature discloses that there are numerous definitions for parental involvement. There is no real consensus on what constitutes as a clear definition for parental involvement. The reason for this is that parents firstly have a choice to become involved in their child's education and secondly where to and how to become involved. The variables accounts for numerous starting points of parental involvement. Adding from whose point of view the study has been done, definitions will also differ.

However, it appears that most definitions of parental involvement fall under four major categories: (a) parental academic aspirations and expectations for children (Bloom, 1980; Keith, 1991; Walberg, 1986), (b) participation in school activities and programs (Epstein, 1984b; Walberg, 1984b), (c) home structure that supports learning (Uguroglu & Walberg, 1986), and (d) communication with children about school (Keith, 1991; Walberg, 1986) in Trivette and Anderson 1995:300). Parents' perceptions, according to a study done by Barge & Loges (2007:144), emerged four themes regarding what characterizes parental involvement: (a)

monitoring student academic progress, (b) cultivating personal relationships with teachers, (c) utilizing extracurricular school programs, and (d) developing community support systems.

The literature readily defines between two ways of getting involved in their child's school environment. The first way is school based involvement and secondly home based involvement. Epstein summarized parental involvement in a framework which consists of six different types of involvement, namely: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community.

Teachers tend to have a narrower view of parental involvement as being primarily school to home communication. Teacher perception of parental involvement in educational home based activities have been found to be linked to those aspects of parental involvement which are more visible to teachers, such as participating in school based activities and other types of parent school and parent teacher contacts.

## CHAPTER 4

### AN ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT POLICIES

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main research question for this study is to determine parents' perceptions of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school. In addition, the following sub-question steer my research:

*How does relevant parental involvement policies manifest in the Department of Basic Education, the Western Cape Education Department, and three quintile five primary schools?*

The purpose of this chapter is to address the sub question on how different policies manifests in the Department of Basic Education, the Western Cape Education Department, and three quintile five primary schools. These parental involvement policies will be measured against Epstein framework for parental involvement to see how each policy measures against each aspect of Epstein's framework.

South Africa forms part of the global economy and is part of a globalisation thesis which can be used to explain almost anything and everything and is notable in current policy documents and policy analysis (Ball 1999:120). Contracting, deregulation and privatisation, although not in South Africa, have reduced, in both practical and ideological terms, the capacity for direct state intervention. This caused a turn in current education policies and this turn is due to uncertainty and congestion according to Ball (1999:121).

One particular and very material aspect of the new politics of uncertainty is the very dramatic change in the trajectory of economic growth and patterns of employment which provided the basis for the massive post-war expansion in the middle classes and the creation of the so-called 'new middle class' (Ball 1999:121). The new middle class' 'imagined futures' and those of their

offspring are now under threat from the 'unmanaged congestion' in the old and new professions and in management positions (Jordon, *et al.*, 1994 in Ball 1999:121). According to Ball this policy dualism is well represented in contemporary education policies which tie together individual, consumer choice in education markets with rhetoric and policies aimed at furthering national economic interests (Ball 1999:122).

This two related policy agendas are discernible in all the heat and noise of this reform. It first aims to tie education more closely to national economic interests, which is the Department of Basic Education, while the second involves a decoupling of education from direct state control, which is the quintile five primary school in terms of the Education Act 84 of 1996 (Ball 1999:125). The first agenda rests on a clear articulation and assertion by the state of its requirements of education, while the second gives at least the appearance of greater autonomy to educational institutions in the delivery of those requirements (Ball 1999:125). The first involves a reaffirmation of the state functions of education as a public good, while the second subject's education to the disciplines of the market and the methods and values of business and redefines it as a competitive private good (Ball 1999:125).

The question which now arises is if the Department of Basic Education is in their means to subtly enforce parental involvement. To be in line with the first agenda, to assert their requirements for education, the notion is that the Department of Basic Education does not see parental involvement as a foremost requirement for education. It might be because of political, economic or social factors, or is it a matter of autonomy given the to the quintile five primary schools to deal with parents.

#### **4.2 REVIEWS OF NATIONAL POLICIES OF SOUTH-AFRICA (OECD, 2008)**

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) is a unique forum where the governments of 30 democracies work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The

Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies (2008:2).

In South Africa, educational transformation and policy implementation have been constrained by the sheer scale of the existing problems, the competition from other social sectors, the difficulties in redirecting funds from personnel to non-personnel expenditure, the inefficiencies in education management and delivery, and – in particular – a lack of capacity at provincial and local government level (2008:146).

Thus, a global approach is needed, including recruitment of new expertise (which does not necessarily mean more civil servants); specific training programs for provincial civil servants, especially in the educational, financial and organisational fields; coaching of key managers and experts; indicators for measuring performance; incentives for better performance; and, if necessary, temporary support by external experts or consultants. When the implementation of a new policy fails, it is all too easy to blame the implementer (OECD 2008:147). If even the provinces are not closely enough involved in policy development, it will be even more remote for school governors, principals, educators, parents, and learners. In any country, it requires a great deal of imagination, flexibility, and creativity to create real involvement of all those who are affected by a proposed reform (OECD 2008:147).

However, this issue of “implement ability” and “sustainability” of proposed reforms is, in any country, an essential test of whether a proposed reform is viable, given the existing conditions in which it has to take root (OECD 2008:147). Many of the reform documents provided to the review team are, viewed in the abstract, most impressive. Seen in relation to the context in which they are expected to operate, they come across as rather removed from reality. The design of policy, while difficult, is easier than its implementation and it is the implementation that counts (OECD 2008:147). Thorough preparation and “road testing” will quickly reveal whether the weakest links in the system can cope with change. The promulgation of norms and standards will not, in itself, change behavior, or create a poor school’s capacity to make things work (OECD 2008:147).

The following focus points, concerning parents, are addressed by the OECD.

#### **4.2.1 FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING (OECD 2008:57)**

In response to poor learning outcomes achieved by South African learners in national and international learner assessment tasks, the Minister of Basic Education launched a three year “foundation for learning” strategy on 18 March 2008. The strategy aims to ensure quality education in the first years that a child spends at school. The strategy is therefore focused on grades R to 3 and is consolidated in the intermediate phase in grades 4 to 6. The implementation in languages and mathematics in the foundation and intermediate phases. Basic Education launched a three year “foundation for learning” strategy on 18 March 2008. The strategy aims to ensure quality education in the first years that a child spends at school. The strategy is therefore focused on grades R to 3 and is consolidated in the intermediate phase in grades 4 to 6. The implementation calls for a commitment by learners, parents and educators to the challenges of learning. It aims to lay a solid foundation in languages and mathematics in the foundation and intermediate phases.

#### **4.2.2 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE (OECD 2008:87)**

One of the key approaches to the restructuring of the education system and of promoting social change in South Africa has been school-level decentralisation. While centralised decision-making has the advantage of pushing through major reforms with the backing of the full state apparatus, there was a strong lobby in the post-1994 period from both the liberation movement and the ex-white schools to devolve authority to schools – though they had opposing motives in doing so. For the democratic movement, broad-based participation in schools was essential in democratising schools. For the Apartheid government, the inclusion of parents in governing bodies was premised on keeping schools much the same, mainly through maintaining the socio-economic status of schools (Karlsson, Macpherson and Pampallis, 2001).

### 4.2.3 SCHOOL FEES (OECD 2008:98)

One of the most important powers devolved upon School Governing Bodies by the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996) is the right to charge school fees, subject to majority parental approval. On the other hand, a majority of poor parents could thus insist on paying low fees and still ensure that their children received access to basic education, while on the other hand, richer parents and communities could continue to spend large amounts to guarantee excellent facilities and low learner: educator ratios for their children. Leaving aside the fact that high fees have permitted some schools to restrict access by learners from other races, as well as those from poor backgrounds, even apparently nominal fees of less than ZAR 100 per annum, which are charged by the vast majority of schools, are a burden on poor parents.

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD 2008:222) encourages the Department of Education to increase its contribution to enable parents and care givers in the home and community to provide appropriate developmental activities for young children. The OECD suggests the following programs which will help parents and that will play a major role in improving long term education outcomes:

1. Understand how their child grows and develops;
2. Act to encourage this growth and development;
3. Ensure their child's safety and well-being;
4. Gain confidence in their parenting skills; these are:
5. Get the support and professional assistance they may need for their child's health and Development.

Keeping in mind the sheer complexity of policymaking as described by Ball (1999:118) I will now identify the linkage between a specific approach such as the The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and Ball and the different stakeholders in South African education. Individual policies of the Department of Basic Education, WCED and selective quintile five primary schools will be analyze to come to an understanding on how these entities addresses and accommodate parental involvement in their policies.

### **4.3 THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION**

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) was formed when the former National Department of Education was split into two: DBE and the Department of Higher Education and Training. The DBE deals with all schools from Grade R to Grade 12, including adult literacy programs.

The aim of the DBE is to develop, maintain and support a South African school education system for the 21st century.

#### **Vision**

Their vision is of a South Africa in which all our people have access to lifelong learning, as well as education and training, which will, in turn, contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa.

#### **Mission**

Their mission is to provide leadership with respect to provinces, districts and schools in the establishment of a South African education system for the 21st century.

#### **4.3.1 ACTION PLAN TOWARDS 2014**

To full fill this mission and vision the DBE created actions plans toward 2014 and 2020. During 2010 the, then, Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga, declared that there would be a plan for schools in South Africa called Action Plan to 2014, and that this would form part of a larger vision called Schooling 2025. Schooling 2025 is a long term plan for the basic education sector which will allow for the monitoring of progress against a set of measurable indicators covering all aspects of basic education including amongst others, enrolments and retention of learners, teachers, infrastructure, school funding, learner well-being and school safety, mass literacy and educational quality.

This 2014 Action Plan explains the 27 national goals that lie at the heart of the 2025 plan. Thirteen of these 27 goals are output goals dealing with better school results and better enrolment of learners in schools. The remaining 14 of 27 goals deal with aspects that must take

place for the output goals to be effective. The goals do not capture everything that must be done, but for a plan to work it is important to identify a few key goals that can guide everyone. For all the goals in the plan, it is explained what the Department of Education is doing to contribute towards success in South Africa's schools.

In contrast, closer inspection reveals that the first 9 goals focus is minimum quality standards for schools. Goals 10 to 13 focus on access and progression for learners, goals 14 to 18 focuses on teachers development, goals 19 and 20 on learner resources, 21 and 22 on whole-school improvements, goal 23 on school funding and goals 24 to 27 on school infrastructure and support services. Goals 14 to 27 deal with ways of achieving the 13 output goals. Unfortunately none of these goals specifically addresses parental involvement. In addition the Department of Basic Education has adopted a set of themes:

1. Focus on quality and efficiency of education
2. Communication to communities
3. Prioritised teaching and learning
4. Strengthened urgent role of all players (entities, quality assurance agencies, unions, parents, partners)
5. Strengthened provincial and national mechanisms, including inter-governmental and interdepartmental mechanisms
6. National Education Policy Act- monitoring and evaluation norms and standards.

However, in line with the NDP, the sector has extended the 2025 plan to stretch to 2030, while keeping its original goals of quality improvement and adding emerging areas that need attention. Implementation of the sector plan and achievement of the targets therein will continue to find expression in school, district, provincial and DBE plans. Thus, the 2014 plan has in the meantime been replaced with the action plan towards 2019 and in conjunction with a broader outlook, not 2025 but towards 2030.

### 4.3.2 SCHOOLING 2025

The 2025 plan is important because it tells what the government will be doing to make Grades R to 12 schooling better, but also because it explains how one can contribute towards making the goals of the plan and Schooling 2025 a reality. Making sure that every young South African receives quality schooling is an urgent need. Yet, The DBE realise that this cannot be realised overnight. The DBE needs a clear vision of where they want to be in 2025, or before then if possible. The DBE admits that they must make sure that every year that they move a bit closer to their vision, recognising that a large improvement is an accumulation of many smaller changes.

By 2025 the following must be seen in every South African school:

- Learners who attend school every day and are on time because they want to come to school, the school is accessible and because they know that if they miss school when they should not, some action is taken. These learners understand the importance of doing their schoolwork, in school and at home, and they know their school will do everything possible to get them to learn what they should. Much learning happens through the use of computers and from Grade 3 onwards all learners are computer literate. Part of the reason why learners want to come to school is that they get to meet friends in an environment where everyone is respected, they will have a good meal, they know they can depend on their teachers for advice and guidance, and they are able to participate in sporting and cultural activities organised at the school after school hours.
  
- Teachers who have received the training they require, are continuously improving their capabilities and are confident in their profession. These teachers understand the importance of their profession for the development of the nation and do their utmost to give their learners a good educational start in life. They are on the whole satisfied with their jobs because their pay and conditions of service in general are decent and similar to what one would find in other professions.

- A school principal who ensures that teaching in the school takes place as it should, according to the national curriculum, but who also understands his or her role as a leader whose responsibility is to promote harmony, creativity and a sound work ethic within the school community and beyond.
- Parents who are well informed about what happens in the school, and receive regular reports about how well their children perform against clear standards that are shared by all schools. These parents know that if something is not happening as it should in the school, the principal or someone in the Department will listen to them and take steps to deal with any problems.
- Learning and teaching materials in abundance and of a high quality. The national Minimum Schoolbag policy, which is widely understood, describes the minimum quantity and quality of materials that every learners must have access to. Computers in the school are an important medium through which learners and teachers access information.
- School buildings and facilities that are spacious, functional, safe and well maintained. Learners and teachers look after their buildings and facilities because they take pride in their school.

The focus of the Department of Basic Education lies toward keeping parents informed on their rights and not so much their responsibilities. The parent is seen as a partner in education but less emphasis is on parental involvement. One feels that if the Department of Basic Education, in this early stage, could encouraged parents from a national perspective to be involved in the learners education, the Department of Basic Education could strengthen the hands of provinces and schools to call on parental support in a more structured manner. The Department could set the tone and climate to make parents realise that they are too, accountable for their child's success.

#### **4.4 WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is responsible for public schooling in the province from Grades 1 to 12. The WCED provide various specialised education services and subsidies Grade R and adult education.

The WCED primary objectives are to build solid foundations in literacy and numeracy in primary school, improve learner pass rates, and to improve the number and quality of our matric results.

##### **4.4.1 PROVINCIAL PLANNING PARADIGM**

In correlation with the Department of Basic education the Western Cape Education also has a vision for One Cape 2040 in which: Every person will have access to a good education that will ensure he or she is appropriately skilled for opportunity, working with parents and teachers to improve the learning and development environment of children, the Western Cape will enjoy a global reputation as a location of ecological, creative, scientific and social innovation excellence. Furthermore, for the five year period 2015- 2019 the province has adopted 5 Provincial Strategic Goals.

These are:

- \_ Strategic Goal 1: Create opportunities for growth and jobs
- \_ Strategic Goal 2: Improve education outcomes and opportunities for youth development
- \_ Strategic Goal 3: Increase wellness, safety and tackle social ills
- \_ Strategic Goal 4: Enable a resilient, sustainable, quality and inclusive living environment
- \_ Strategic Goal 5: Embed good governance and integrated service delivery through partnerships and spatial alignment

The WCED has a more direct approach in which they have a vision to work with parents and teachers to improve the learning and development environment of the learners.

#### **4.5 QUINTILE FIVE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

According to a Media Release of the Minister of Education Donald Grant, Western Cape on 14 October, 2013 All South African public ordinary schools are categorised into five groups, called quintiles, largely for purposes of the allocation of financial resources. Quintile one is the 'poorest' quintile, while quintile five is the 'least poor'. These poverty rankings are determined nationally according to the poverty of the community around the school, as well as, certain infrastructural factors. Each quintile, nationally, contains 20% of all learners, but not 20% from each province. Schools in quintile 1, 2 and 3 have been declared no-fee schools, while schools in quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-paying schools. A schools quintile ranking is important as it determines the amount of funding that it receives each year and whether or not the school can charge fees.

Learners attending Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools do not pay school fees. Therefore, in order to compensate these schools for their loss in fee income, the state provides them with a larger Norms and Standards allocation than schools classified as "fee-paying" schools in quintiles 4 and 5. Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools receive the same amount per learner.

However, given the circumstances of some schools, their quintile ranking of Quintile 4 and 5, does not work in their favor. For example, the national data that has been used to determine their poverty status does not take into account the demographics of specific schools. There are schools which do not draw their majority enrolments from the local area (there may not be children of school going age in the area). Some of these schools then educate significant numbers of children from families which cannot meet the fee arrangements at their children's schools.

Parental involvement in quintile five primary schools will focus on sponsorships, fundraisings and parent teacher committees. The mission of these schools will also usually necessitates the importance of parental involvement for example working with parents on core values of the school, as identified by the community and being involved to the benefit of the learner and consequently to the success of the school. In the words of one of the respondent schools, this quintile five primary school does not have a parental involvement policy as such, but that involvement forms the basis of all school activities and that parental involvement and parenting

is primary to all successful school activities. This study focuses on quintile five primary schools because I taught at these schools for 20 years.

#### **4.5 EPSTEIN'S FRAMEWORK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

I will now compare the Department of Basic Education, The Western Cape Education Department and the selected quintile five primary schools' policies with that of Epstein's framework of parental involvement. Different policies involving parental involvement will be compared to each objective of the type of involvement. The parenting types and objectives are: Type 1: parenting - to help all families establish home environments to support children as students. Type 2: communicating - to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress. Type 3 volunteering - to recruit and organize parent help and support. Type 4 learning at home - provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. Type 5 decision makings- to include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

##### **4.5.1 TYPE 1 PARENTING**

*To help all families establish home environments to support children as students*

The South African Schools Act No. 84 Of 1996 states that every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first. Any parent who, without just cause and after a written notice from the Head of Department, fails to comply with this, is guilty of an offence and liable for conviction to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months.

Additionally, in assisting parents with preparing their children for school the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development was written in July 1997. The vision for the Early Childhood

Development (ECD) is that it will serve as the bedrock for child and family life, as well as for future learning. It will be concerned with the holistic development of the young child and ensure an environment characterised by safety, protection, anti-bias and cultural fairness, so that attitudinal and psychological healing, reconciliation and the start of nation building can take place at a young age. All children, including those with special needs, need to be affirmed in their own right and encouraged to become lifelong learners and active, creative and critical participants in society. An adequate ECD infra-structure that can free parents, especially mothers, to take up employment and further their education will enable women in poor families to break out of the cycle of poverty, illiteracy and economic dependence.

Therefore, the Government's intervention in Early Childhood Development is based on 9 principles of which these three directly relates to parenting: (p 13)

1. Parents and families have the primary responsibility for the care and upbringing of the young child.
2. Government ECD policy and its successful execution at all levels will aim at the empowerment of parents, families and communities to foster the care and development of their young children.
3. For an ECD program to be effective it must be based on the involvement of parents, communities and other stakeholders in democratic governance structures.

In my view the Department of Basic Education is serious in promoting and advocating parent involvement in specifically early childhood development. The acknowledgement and use of terms such as “primary responsibility”, “empowerment of families” and “active involvement of parents” are working towards, in what I believe, the core of education which is that parent must take the first steps towards being involved in the education of their children. This co-inside with the Interim Curriculum Framework and Accreditation Guidelines for ECD Provision (p 27) which states that, “Parents should be valued as primary educators of their children and as active partners with other family and community members in facilitating the process of learning.”

It is, however not evident if this intervention from the government in early childhood development, features in the senior grades. In senior grades the focus lies more towards the

responsibility of the school to see to it that the learner progresses. The parent more likely has the right to question the efficiency of the school and not the performance of their child.

In contrast with the view of the Department of Basic Education, which is to focus more on the rights of the parents and less on the responsibilities of the parent, the Western Cape Education take a more direct approach. The WCED's approach is to be more specific regarding the responsibilities of the parent.

The WCED focus also on the involvement of the parent as set out in the following: Guidelines For Parents: Parents need to know and be informed that all school policies must be aligned to the South African Constitution, parents should have access to information regarding their rights and obligations in terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996, parents/guardians, must specifically be informed about their rights and responsibilities with regard to the governance of the school, including the process of deciding the school budget, any decision of a parent meeting relating to school fees, the code of conduct for learners, the language policy and the religion policy and that the parent have an obligation to be interested in and support their children in their schooling.

Furthermore, the guide to: General Responsibilities As The Parents Of Enrolled Learners, focus directly on the responsibilities parents have, such as support the learning process, encourage and support homework, ensure and monitor learner attendance, ensure the safety and well-being of learners. Parents must attend school meetings regularly, support the school's code of conduct, be acquainted with the learners' code of conduct. The WCED see support as a main part of a parent's contribution by means of supporting effective parent/school communication, supporting the governing body, principal and teachers and support schools in field trips, assemblies, student performances and sports events.

The WCED has also developed an extensive program of support to schools for the election and training of new School Governing Bodies in 2015. The focus of the training will be on the roles and responsibilities of SGB members, which includes their role in the nomination of principals and teachers. There will be a strong focus on their role in financial management. There will be

explicit emphasis on the need to keep parents informed of educational matters and to strengthen their parenting role.

Quintile five primary schools will always encourage parents to be involved at home. Speakers will be invited to address parents regarding certain education aspects such as positive parenting and ADHD support groups.

#### **4.5.2 COMMUNICATING**

*To design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress*

The Department Of Basic Education has an active website for information for parents. Information posted on the website of the Department Of Basic Education for parents/caregivers for ways in which parents can get involved are: Certification Services, How to enroll your child at a school, Information on Home education, School Fees, School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and Self-Study Guides for Grade 10 – 12.

Documents for parents/caregivers are the 2015 School Calendar, the 2016 School Calendar, The National Education Policy Act: Admission Policy for ordinary public schools (GG19377 Notice 2432) A, national Guidelines on School Uniforms and Rights and responsibilities of parents, learners in public schools: public school policy guide 005.

Furthermore, the National Education Information Policy Department of Education, 13 August 2004, creates a framework that allows for the coordinated and sustainable development of education information systems. Section 2 (p5) and 8 (p8) specifically focus on information for parents. Section two of the National Education Information Policy has two main goals. The first is the goal of an education system where information systems enhance the day-to-day running of institutions and education departments, and provide better information to the public as a whole, thereby promoting accountability. The second is the goal of an education system where information systems yield increasingly valuable data and statistics needed for planning and

monitoring purposes, which occurs at all levels from the individual institution to the national Department of Education.

The purpose of *The Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools Act no. 27 of 1996*, is to provide a framework to all provincial departments of education and governing bodies of public schools for developing the admission policy of the school.

The following responsibilities are applicable for parents: A parent must complete an application form for admission, which should be made available to him or her by the principal of the school together with the admission policy and the code of conduct for learners of the school. The principal must ensure that parents are given whatever assistance they may require to complete the form. (14). When a parent applies for admission of a learner to an ordinary public school, the parent must present an official birth certificate of the learner to the principal of the public school. If the parent is unable to submit the birth certificate, the learner may be admitted conditionally until a copy of the birth certificate is obtained from the regional office of the Department of Home Affairs. The principal must advise parents that it is an offence to make a false statement about the age of a child. (See Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (No. 51 of 1992).) The parent must ensure that the admission of the learner is finalised within three months of conditional admission. (15). Again, the Department of Basic Education focus on informing parents on their rights.

The website of the Western Cape Education Department is a focal source of information for parents. The website has information for learners, parents, educators and school administrators. Information for parents ranges from examination time tables, right and responsibilities of parents, Grade R-9 Mathematics: A selection of 14 video clips on YouTube, Tips for Parents what you can do at home to build the reading, writing and calculating abilities of your children. To be in line with effective forms of school-to-home communications about children's progress the Western Cape Education Department has a standard report form for communicating learners' results.

Communicating with parents in a quintile five primary school takes place on a daily basis. Informing parents on day to day activities and the progress of learners take place in the form of websites, year planners, newsletters, circulars and school reports. In my view keeping parents informed on school activities and learner performance are key factors in promoting parental involvement. An informed parent is an involved parent.

### **4.5.3 TYPE 3 VOLUNTEERING**

*To Recruit and organize parent help and support*

The Department Of Basic Education stipulates that the Governing Body of a public school must promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school by encouraging parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school; (20. (1)(h) Act 84 of 1996).

Taking from the interviews parents have the perception that volunteering at school is being expected of you, it is important and that they are willing to volunteer and support. The teacher's encouragement plays a role in how much a parent will support or volunteer and insofar as it is in the parents' means to support and if it fits into their schedule, they will support. Volunteering is perceived as helping at stalls, be part of prayer meetings, binding flyers, giving talks at school, helping with concerts and demonstrating items that are being discussed in class.

### **4.5.4 TYPE 4 LEARNING AT HOME**

To provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

The Department Of Basic Education suggest that parents can be involved in the following ways: Parents must involve themselves actively in the activities of the school, including school governance structures, have regular discussions with your children about general school matters;

cultivate a healthy, open and cooperative relationship with their children's teachers, create a home environment that is conducive to studying, assist in the protection of educational resources such as textbooks, chairs, tables and other objects; and contribute, within their means, the necessary resources to the schooling of your children.

The WCED directly addresses the parent in the guide on “General Support in Teaching and Learning Math’s (Numeracy) At Home.” By suggesting that the parent can do a lot to improve the math skills of their children at home. The following are some examples: Teach your child about shapes by making sandwiches and cutting them into shapes, e.g. squares and triangles, ask them to make pairs, etc. and measure popcorn/maize in a cup:  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups.

The WCED also advise the parent with the “General Support in Teaching and Learning Literacy At Home” by giving the parent examples on how to improve the reading, writing and language skills of their children at home. The following are some examples: read to your child every day share family stories and to talk, talk, talk – your child learns about spoken words by listening to you.

Furthermore the WCED has a holiday and leisure-time reading guide. Parents play a key role in building the reading and writing skills of their children by encouraging them to read during holidays and after school hours. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has prepared reading lists to guide parents on book selection at local libraries and when buying books for their children. Reading lists have been compiled by EDULIS, the library and curriculum support service of the WCED, according to language and grade level. They are intended to spark a love of reading at all levels. The local librarian will be happy to provide further advice on books for readers in every age group.

The quintile five Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home and how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments. Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class. Calendars with activities for parents and students at home. .will be made available.

#### 4.5.5 TYPE 5 DECISION MAKING

*Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives*

The Department of Basic Education act 84 of 1996 stipulates that the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body and the governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school. The Governing Body of ordinary public school consist of the principal, in his or her official capacity and co-opted members, parents of learners at the school, educators at the school, members of staff at the school who are not educators and learners in the eighth grade or higher at the school.

The Department of Basic Education stipulates that the Governing Body of a public school must-promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school; ( Article 20. (1) (a) act 84 of 1996) by providing 10 specific goals in doing so.

Extended functions of governing bodies may be added to the existing functions of the Body Government if applied to the Head of Department in writing and if the governing body concerned does have the capacity to perform such function effectively. Functions include, for example, maintaining and improving the school's property and to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school. (Article 21. (a) and (c) of act 84 of 1996). The Head of Department may, however on reasonable grounds, withdraw a function of a governing body. (Article 22. 1 of act 84 of 1996).

In addition, Chapter Four of Schools act 84 of 1996 deals with the funding of public schools wherein a governing body of a public school must take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school. (Article 36. 84 of 1996).

#### 4.7 SUMMARY

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has a narrow focus on the rights parents have towards education and less on parental involvement. In an attempt to pave the way forward for parental involvement the DBE focus on early childhood development by securing better parent involvement in lower grades. The DBE also enhance the responsibility the schools have towards the parents' rights by means of acts rather than policies. The DBE communicate through the use of a webpage which serves as a platform of information for parents. The Western Cape Education Department has a wider focus on the rights parents have and the responsibilities parents have to be involved at school and at home. Information are conveyed to parents by means of a webpage which also, as the DBE, serves as platform for information. Numerous examples are given advantages on how the parent can be involved. This illustrates that the WCED is aware of the advantages parental involvement has. The quintile five primary school has a specific focus on the parent involvement. The quintile five primary schools encourage parental involvement because they are well aware of the advantages parental involvement has for their schools. Thus, parents are involved from decision making to collaborating with the community. Continuous invitations and opportunities are directed towards the parents. The quintile five school also use webpages to boast opportunities where parents can become involved.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **INTERVIEWS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Further to the literature review and analysis of policies, more information about parental involvement has been gathered by means of semi structured interviews. Interviews were held with parents and teachers of three selected quintile five primary schools. The best way to proceed is to look at the responses thematically in accordance to the theoretical basis, as defined By Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement (2002).

#### **5.2 INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY**

Interview methodology begins from view that the interviewed subject's viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in an openly designed interview situation than in a questionnaire (May ED Quantile research in action London. (207). A semi-structured interview was conducted at three different quintile five primary schools. Twenty parents were interviewed.

##### **5.2.1 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

The reason for this semi structured interview is to analyse the perception parents have on parental involvement thereby giving the teachers and consequently the school a better understanding of what parents perceive as parental involvement in a quintile five primary school. The twenty participants were volunteers in this research. They were free to participate or withdraw at any time. The respondents privacy were protected, therefore the interviews were confidential and anonyms.

A letter requesting permission for conducting this research was sent to the Western Cape Education Department granting permission to start the research. This letter of confirmation, received from the Western Cape Department of Education together with an official letter of Participation from the Stellenbosch University was sent to each of the four selected schools. The

schools were selected based on their quintile status as explained in chapter one. A letter with back ground information accompanied the letter of request, to each of the four Headmasters.

Permission was granted from three schools and the interviews could be arranged. One school, although supporting research in the broader sense, did not give permission stating "that the matter of parent involvement is of delicate matter and did not want parents and teachers to be delivered to such a study". One school requested the questions before hand, but agreed to take part in the research. Two schools gave their permission without any prior conditions. Consequently, my research took place in three quintile five primary schools.

English and Afrikaans letters were handed out to all the parents in the three quintile five primary schools inviting every parent in grade six to participate in the interviews. A dedicated person at each school managed the logistics by means of handing out and collecting the reply slips. After every volunteer's contact details were captured all further correspondences took place, personally between me and the interviewee.

An appropriate date, time and place that suited the respondent were arranged. Twelve questions were e-mailed to the volunteers beforehand. Participants were informed that a recording device would be used for interviews. Interviews were conducted in the language of the participant's choice. The interviews took place on an individual basis as well as four interviews which were attendant by both parents. To insure consistency, all respondents were asked the same questions in order for me to reflect on various responses on the same question.

### **5.3 INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS**

The study is based on the perceptions of grade six learners' parents because of my twenty years of experience in three different quintile five primary schools of which sixteen years' experience were specifically with grade six learners.

### **5.3.1 PARENTS**

The parents all have children in grade 6. Questions were designed to explore and investigate how parents perceive parental involvement. No questions were asked about back ground, level of income, tertiary education or place of stay. These aspects did not form part of the research. The research focuses more on the quintile level of the school, thus implying that the quintile statuses of the school are common denominator in the study. The reasons why parent are not involved did not form part of this study.

Twenty four parents participated in the interviews. One parent did not want to stay anonyms, seven fathers and sixteen mothers took part. Five parents are English speaking of which one is a father. The twenty four respondents are grade six parents of three quintile five primary schools. The schools are situated in the Northern Suburbs of the Bellville Municipality, Western Cape.

### **5.3.2 TEACHERS**

The six teachers were identified to act as a measuring point against parents and to assist with further insights, would it need be. The teachers were asked only four of the twelve questions, because the main focus was to identify the parents' perception of parental involvement. The teacher's age, experience and level of contact were not taken in consideration. The only consideration was that they are teaching in grade six.

## **5.4 INTERVIEWS**

### **5.4.1 Interview questions**

The different set of question was asked for the parents and teacher. The reason for this was to use the teachers a yard stick. The focus is not on the teachers' perception but that of the parents' perceptions. The questions were based on readings from the literature in order to compliment findings made by previous research, to compare certain statements made by parents with those of the teachers perception and in addition to add some further insight from the parents and

teachers. The questions all lead to question twelve, answering the research question which was to determine what parents' perception of parental involvement in a quintile five primary school is.

#### **5.4.1.1 PARENTS**

The following questions were asked for the parents.

- What motivates you to become involved with the school?
- How would you describe your involvement at school: supportive, monitoring, voluntarily or managerial?
- How will you describe your involvement at home: supportive or monitoring?
- Which involvement is most important: home or school involvement?
- How do your personal circumstances determine your involvement at school?
- Does the school's attitude, in terms of parent involvement, influence your participation?
- What is your attitude towards parent involvement at school?
- Is it important to be visible at school?
- Does your parental involvement at school influence your child's success?
- Does your parental involvement at school influence your child's success at school?
- What is your perception of parental involvement?

#### **5.4.1.1 TEACHERS**

- What motivates parents to get involved at school?
- Which is more important - parental involvement at home or at school?
- Has parental involvement at school have an influence on the success of the learner?
- What is your perception of parental involvement?

## **5.5 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS**

The analysis from the interviews produced valuable insight and information. Some of the responses were given in detail. The best way to proceed was to look at the responses thematically in accordance to the theoretical basis of parental involvement as defined by Epstein's six types of Parent involvement (2002) Furthermore; themes emerging from the study are added.

Teachers' insights were added to compliment, confirm or differ from parents' perception. The idea is not to compare the two perceptions as an opposite, but rather to levitate the idea of the importance of the partnership between the school, the parent and the learner as stipulated by Epstein (2002).

### **5.5.1 Parenting**

The parents perceive that it is important to be involved and that their main the reason for becoming involved at school is their child. Involvement shows that parents are supporting their child by creating a positive environment for their children. This involvement leads to a better, open relationship between the parent and the child. Consequently, the child feels positive, important and exited which in turn make the children feeling to do their best. Parents perceive that they want set an example to their child and by being involved at the school they also show interest in the child's development.

The parents also perceive that they give something from themselves. One respondent said that choosing between earning more money and involvement at school his child chose involvement at school. When the parents are involved they can give some input. As parents, they do not want to repeat the mistake of their parents not being involved and not supporting them at school.

Personality also plays a part and they want to use their talents to the advantage of the school. Parents perceive that involvement at school creates a feeling of positivism among family members and involved parents are happy parents.

On the contrary, some parents perceive that being too involved may take away the child's independence and the parent there fore may act as a crutch. Children must take responsibility for their own actions.

### **5.5.2 Communicating**

Throughout the interviews communication formed an important part of the basis of parental involvement. In almost every question the aspect of communication came to the fore ground. Parents replied that involvement opened a door of communication. This relates to the fact that parents want to be informed about the progress and where about of their children. A teacher made the remark that it is sad to inform a parent about something only to find out that the parent had no idea what is going on in the child's school life. Furthermore when parents are informed they can support the child at home, learn to know the teacher better and the teacher can learn more of the child and from the parent's circumstances.

If the child does not understand what the teacher means during a lesson the parent can contact the teacher more easily. Parents also communicate with other parents to compare different situation in different classes. Parents will contact each other to find out more about homework, school activities and academic rosters. It is also helps if other parents know who you are and it make t is easier for them to ask you to help at school. Seeing other children' parents at school will form a better picture of your child's social circles and the parent can decide if they can relate to their child's social circles. However, communication should always be in a supportive and positive manner according to one parent.

### **5.5.3 Volunteering**

There is not a big distinguished in the number of responses between volunteering and supporting, therefore both concepts were analyzed. One respondent said that support and volunteering at school is being expected of you, it is important and that they are willing to volunteer and support. The teacher's encouragement plays a role in how much a parent will support or volunteer and

insofar as it is in the parents' means to support and if it fits into their schedule, they will support and volunteer. As for support, parents said that they will support the teacher, the learner, sport activities and the mission and vision of the school by means of attending school activities.

Volunteering is perceived as helping at stalls, be part of prayer meetings, binding flyers, giving talks at school, helping with concerts and demonstrating items that are being discussed in class for instance diving suites.

Schools do have Parent Teacher Association where parents can get involved in managerial positions. One respondent said that is not his duty to monitor the school. Parents feel that one must not make a nuisance of one self and that the parent must by means of volunteering and support build the foundation of the child, the school and for the benefit of both.

#### **5.5.4 Learning at home**

Respondents agree that supporting at home is important and they want to set an example for their child. Respondents will support learners with homework, emotionally and with academic in general.

Learning at home constitutes a broader term for parents as they are involved in more areas than just school. They are involved in different facets of their child's upbringing. They want to be available for their child. They want to be there for them. If everything is in place at home the child will feel safe and the parent will do their best to make the best of every day for their child. Saying that, they also believe that children should be independent, have their own goals and must proceed on their own.

Monitoring is more important for the dads. Parents want to know if their child is on the right track. Parents perceive that too much monitoring will take away the responsibility and it depends on the age of the child. Furthermore revision of work done at school and parents are informed on what is happening in class. Thus, resulting parents and teachers working in a team towards the best interest of the child

The teachers agree that involvement starts at home. At home the child gets one on one attention whereas at school the parent's attention is divided between different aspects of the school. Teachers build on the upbringing from the home and if aspects such as discipline, respect, religion and social skills are not taught at home the child will fall behind those children who are raised in such a manner.

Parents were asked what is more important to them; volunteering and support at school or learning at home. Most responded replied that learning at home is more important, some respondents felt that both are evenly important and volunteering and support at school came third.

At home the parents create a culture where the child's personality is formed. The child takes what he learns at home to school. Parents deem learning at home as their primary role. If everything is well at home the child will feel safe at school where nothing will the child off guard. One participant mentioned it is about the child and not the school.

Those in favor that volunteering and supporting at school and learning at home argued that there are not supposed to be any division between school and home. The child spend most of the day at the school and the teacher must stand in for the parent. The school is the place where the child can interact and learn social skills. The parents perceive that they must not interfere with the school's operations and that their involvement must not benefit the child's achievement in an infringing matter.

### **5.5.5 Decision making**

The inclusion of parents as part of the decision making process, by means of the Governing Body, Parents Teacher Association, committees and policies, at the school are discussed in chapter three.

Respondents did mention the Parents Teachers Association where they can get involved. Another type of involvement mentioned was class representative. None of the respondents were part of the Governing Body; they did recognise the function and existence of the Governing Body. Their interest in involvement was more towards involvement on class level. Involvement on a managerial level was raised but none of the respondents was much concerned about the functioning of the Governing Body.

### **5.5.6 Collaborating with the community**

Respondents mentioned that their schools are part of projects such as the Santa Shoe project, being involved in less privilege schools, sandwich projects and volunteering and supporting fund raising projects. Projects that are not aimed to raise funds for the school but to invest in charity organizations.

## **5.6 OTHER FACTORS REGARDING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DERIVED FROM THE INTERVIEWS**

### **5.6.1 Do parents think it is important to be visible at school?**

Respondents had different views on this question. Responses varied from “definitely, it is not the most important, irrelevant and definitely not.” Those in favor of being visibly involved argued that the parent set an example for their child, it motivates other parents to get involved, you meet new parents, you learn more from your child in the school environment, the parent shows interest in his child, it is part of your personality and you consequently support your child.

Respondents who said it is less important or irrelevant argued that the parent can be involved without other parents have to know your involvement, a parent can support the school anonymously and a parent needs only to react on requests from the school. One parent admitted that she at first thought, in the lower grades that it is important to be seen at school, but as the years progress she realized that it is irrelevant. The reason for not being that important is that she

thought if the teacher knows her better, they will form a better picture of the child. Today it is irrelevant and she is doing it for her child.

One parent responded with a definite no. Her reasons for this is that children have to take own responsibility, there become a blurring of lines in context of who is the parent, who is the teacher and who does the child turns to for support. It is about discipline and children telling other children my parent did this or that. She will support the school in any way, not necessarily in a visible manner.

Parents believe that the reasons and motivation for being involved at school play an important role. The parent must not try to benefit from being visible, use it to influence your child's chances to play for the first team and the parent does not have to take the accolade for the child's success.

### **5.6.2 Does parental involvement at school influence the child's success at school?**

Respondent replied indifferent and stated the following: Not as direct as at home, the personality of the child plays a role, it is more a matter of showing interest in the child, by talking positively about the school the child stays in a positive frame of mind and for one respondent it is not clear if her involvement at school has anything to do with the success of her child.

A parent responded that she does not hope so, because it would be wrong and can be misinterpreted by others. The child must achieve success on his own merits. It is also wrong if another child are to benefit in spite of his child, because of the other child's parents involvement.

Teachers react indifferent. It varied from Yes, definitely to It is not necessary to and the parent can inspire the child. One teacher believes that involved parents do not necessarily have the most successful children. Parental involvement can improve the functioning of the school and should not benefit one child above another. In the case of academics it certainly helps if the parent is involved and it is then when the teacher need the parent most.

Parents acknowledge the fact that there are parents that are more visible at school. The child must not feel he is wonderful because of what the parent has done. Parents also believe that they should not be on a committee only to benefit the child. The main factor to consider, as a parent putt it is that there must be a balance between your visibility at school and the reasons and motivation for doing so. One parent stated that child will not receive more attention from the teacher but the teacher will be more incline to give attention.

## **5.7 PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The main research question was to determine what the parents' perception of parental involvement is. The teachers were also asked to see what their perceptions of parental involvement are. The main reason for this comparison is not to compare the two perceptions as direct opposites, but to see where perceptions meet or differs. Knowing the differences can form the basis of dialogue between parents and teacher to strengthen the bond between the parent and the teacher.

### **5.7.1 Parents' perception of parental involvement**

The parents perceive that parental involvement is important, benefiting the child and will use every opportunity of involvement to form the child either at home or at school. Parents want to support the school and thus setting an example for their child. The parents feel that the child wants the parent to be involved at their school plays and sport matches. It may be detrimental to your child if one is not involved.

Parents are involved in all aspects of their child of which school forms one aspect. Parents want to be informed. Involvement gives the parent a feeling of satisfaction. Parents can be in the back ground as well. Parents want to create an environment in which the children can reach their potential.

On the contrary, parents also perceive that there must be a balance in the involvement and being to involve may be to the disadvantage of the child. Furthermore, it is always the same group that

is involved and not enough parents are involved or visible. Involvement should not influence the teacher or interfere with the school's management. There are correct and incorrect ways to get involved. The school must have a Code of conduct or policy to manage or control involvement. One respondent felt that there are parents that are only visible at school only to benefit the child and not to support the school and that there are parents that are only involved at home and they do not support the school.

### **5.7.2 Teachers' perception of parental involvement**

Teachers perceive that parental involvement is important for the development of the child, that the school function better with the support of the parent. It forms a bond between parent, teacher and child. The motivation for parents to get involved is their children, which are their most valuable asset, and that each parent only wants the best for their child. Parents want to support the child and school. Furthermore, parental involvement creates an environment for effective learning and an atmosphere for growth and enthusiasm.

However, teachers perceive that parental involvement must be managed. Parental involvement place parents in a position to benefit the child and it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between supporting the school and supporting the child. Parental involvement must be child centered and not interfere with the management of the school by means of dictating. It can be uncomfortable for both the teacher and the child if there is not a balance.

## **5.8 SUMMARY**

Parents perceive parental as important and that their involvement is to support their child. Communication plays an important role, because this will enable the parent to be as much involved as possible, either at the sport field or in the class. The parent also perceive involvement must be balanced and that is not a necessity for the parent to be visible at school. Teachers also perceive involvement as important but feels that involvement must be managed and balanced.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study was to determine what parents' perception of parental involvement in a quintal five primary school is. The literature review in Chapter 3 and the policy analysis in Chapter 4 focus on the global and national levels, while the interviews in Chapter 5 focus on the local level. In the previous chapter I reported on my findings of having conducted twenty, semi-structured interviews in a certain area in the Cape North District Municipality. In this final chapter I bring my study to conclusion and reflect on the usefulness of my method and methodology. I then discuss the findings of this study and make recommendations for future study. I reflect on the limitations of my study and conclude with an overview.

#### **6.2 METHOD AND METHODOLOGY**

##### **6.2.1 RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study qualitative methodology will manifest by means of interviewing parents, and a quantitative approach in which teachers filled out a questionnaire. Consequently, I will validate the perception parents have of parental involvement with that of the teacher's perception by means of triangulation.

##### **6.2.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study I used the qualitative methodology. The characteristics of the qualitative research are grounded in its aims. The aims of qualitative methodology relate to understanding some aspect of social life and its methods which generate words as data, interviews for example, for analysis according to Quinn, Patton and Cochran (2000:4).

Specific focus was on Critical Theory. By far the most important dimension of critical inquiry is the fact that it is driven by emancipator interest, that is, its purpose is to contribute to change in people's understanding of themselves and their practices, thus freeing them from societal constraints (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:197).

## **6.3 FINDINGS**

I will now discuss my findings in the order in which this study was conducted. I will report my findings from literature; then the ways in which parental involvement policies manifest in national, provincial and quintile five primary school level; on interviews, based on Epstein's framework of parental involvement and, finally, the results from the questionnaires filled out by the teachers.

### **6.3.1 LITERATURE**

In accordance to Boote and Beile's (2005) framework for the literature review, I did research on definitions of parental involvement; the reasons and ways in which parents are involved; parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement; research techniques used in the field of parental involvement and variables in the field of parental involvement.

Most definitions of parental involvement fall under four major categories: (a) parental academic aspirations and expectations for children (Bloom, 1980; Keith, 1991; Walberg, 1986), (b) participation in school activities and programs (Epstein, 1984b; Walberg, 1984b), (c) home structure that supports learning (Uguroglu & Walberg, 1986), and (d) communication with children about school (Keith, 1991; Walberg, 1986) in Trivette and Anderson(1995:300.)

By only dissecting a small sample of articles, I have found that the definition of parental involvement is not easily defined. The reason for this, I have found, is that the lenses through which the interviewer looks must first be defined. Thus, when research is done on parents' perceptions, parents should be interviewed.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997:67) also put forth what appears to be a comprehensive theoretical framework about parental involvement. Their theoretical conceptualization about parental involvement focuses on three main issues: (1) why parents become involved in their children's education, (2) how parents choose specific types of involvement, and (3) why parental involvement has positive influence on students' education outcomes.

According to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:310), the reasons why parents get involved are based on three general factors: (a) parents' beliefs that taking part in their children's learning is a part of their responsibility (i.e., parental role construction) and their evaluation of their capabilities in that regard (i.e., parenting self-efficacy), (b) parents' perception of invitations or demands from schools and teachers and from their children to be involved, and (c) demands on parents' time and energy that may conflict with involvement activities (e.g., caring for other children, extended family responsibilities, demanding or inflexible work schedules.)

Literature also defines between two ways of getting involved in their child's school environment. The first way is school based involvement and secondly home based involvement. Parent involvement at home is defined by Sheldon (2002:302) as parent-child interaction on school-related or other learning activities and represents the direct investment of parents' resources in his or her child's education.

A study done by Barge & Loges on parents' perceptions (2007:144) on parents' perception of involvement four themes emerged regarding what characterizes parental involvement: (a) monitoring student academic progress, (b) cultivating personal relationships with teachers, (c) utilizing extracurricular school programs, and (d) developing community support systems.

I have found that when literature are scrutinized, one arrives at the conclusion that the perceptions parents have of parental involvement and reasons for parents' involvement, are based on parents' personal choice to become involved, parents perceptions formed by the expectations the school have on involvement and the parents' beliefs on parenting.

Epstein (2002:25) developed a framework of Six Types of Parent involvement. Although, still from an academic perception I have found that this frame work forms the basis of many studies on parental involvement.

This framework is:

**TYPE 1: PARENTING:** Supporting, nurturing and child rearing.

Families establish home environments to support children as students.

**TYPE 2: COMMUNICATING:** relating, reviewing and overseeing.

Design effective form of school to home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

**TYPE 3: VOLUNTEERING:** Supervising and fostering.

Recruit and organize parent help and support.

**TYPE 4: LEARNING AT HOME:** Managing, recognizing and rewarding.

Provide information and ideas families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum - related activities, decision to and planning.

**TYPE 5: DECISION MAKING:** contributing, considering and judging.

Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

**TYPE 6: COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY:** Sharing and giving.

Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

I have found that many studies have been done regarding parental involvement and that this may lead to the perception that researchers has collected enough data on parental involvement before 2000. Therefore, taking Fen and Chan (2001:5) and Jaynes (2007) studies in perspective, it might not be necessary to do more in-depth research on parental involvement, because so much information can be analyzed from existing literature.

Hoover and Dempsey (1995:324) suggest that the two major variables are the parents' selection of appropriate involvement strategies and activities and the schools expectation for parental involvement.

### 6.3.2 POLICIES

A sub-question that steered this study was to determine how relevant parental involvement policies manifest in the Departments of Basic Education, the Western Cape Education, and three quintile five primary schools. Thus, the different parental involvement policies of the National Department of Education, Western Cape Education Department and the three quintile five primary schools were scrutinized to come to a better understanding of each of these three entities' focus of their view of parental involvement.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has a narrow focus on parental involvement. Their focus is more on the rights parents have and less on the role parents have towards their parental involvement. In an attempt to pave the way forward for parental involvement the DBE focus on early childhood development by securing better parent involvement in early childhood development. The DBE also enhance the responsibility the schools have towards the parents' rights by means of acts rather than policies. The DBE communicates through the use of a webpage which serves as a platform of information for parents regarding their rights. The reason for leaning more towards the rights of the parent, rather than their involvement, might be because the DBE is partially remote from parents' supportive role. Parents will contact the DBE in school-parent conflict situations where acts, for example the South African Schools Act of 1996, rather than policies, will clear conflict situations.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED), has a two way focus on parental involvement. The WCED focus is on both the rights of parents and the responsibilities parents have to be involved at school and at home. The rights of the parents are grounded in the South African Schools Act of 1996. Information on ways to become involved are conveyed to parents by means of a webpage which also, as the DBE, serves as platform for information. Numerous examples on this webpage are given on how parents can be involved in for example mathematics and school readiness. This illustrates that the WCED is well aware of the advantages parental involvement has for schools.

The quintile five primary school has a specific focus on parent involvement. The quintile five primary school encourage parental involvement, because the schools are well aware of the advantages parental involvement has for their schools. Thus, the quintile five primary school involves parents from decision making to collaborating with the community. Also, continues involvement invitations and opportunities are directed towards the parents. The quintile five schools use webpages to communicate effectively with the parents to boast involvement opportunities. Quintile five primary schools do not have parent involvement polices as such, but parental involvement does play a fundamental role in the day to day operation of the school.

### **6.3.3 INTERVIEWS**

I used Joyce Epstein's framework of parental involvement as my theoretical departure and framework for my interviews. The interview questions were based on each of the six types of involvement.

#### **6.3.3.1 Parenting**

Parents perceive involvement as an important aspect of parenting. It is an ongoing act of support which flows over to the school. The parent will always support their child by showing interest in their child, there by forming the child's ability and personality to the best of the parents' capabilities. Parents also want to set an example for their children so that the children can also be of help.

#### **6.3.3.2 Communicating**

Communication plays an important role in involving parents. The parent wants to be informed on what is happening on at school. They want to follow the progress of their children. Being informed helps them to support the school and to make educated decisions regarding the academics of their children. Parents also communicate with other parents to compare what is taught at in class and to compare if their child is on the right track. Teachers may not underestimate these ongoing conversations at the sport field and school activities.

### **6.3.3.3 Volunteering**

Parents are always willing to volunteer at school activities and thereby supporting the school. Thus, by doing so they create a source of income for the school. This income can better the school and create more learning opportunities for their child. By means of volunteering the parent gives back to the school. The perception parents have is that they would not be less involved if the school are not asking for volunteers. One should also not be too involved in volunteering so that the perception is created that the parent is only involved to benefit the child. Parents also see volunteering as part of being a mother or a father.

### **6.3.3.4 Learning at home**

Parental involvement starts at home. At home parents focus on the support, personal well-being and growth of the child. Involvement at school is as important and by supporting the school the focus is still lies at the child. The support at school is a mean to create better learning conditions at school.

### **6.3.3.5 Decision making**

Policy from Governmental to school level differs in their perception of parental involvement. The closer to the school the more complete the policy for parents are. Parental involvement need to be managed if need be.

### **6.3.3.6 Collaborating with the community**

Parents are always willing to collaborate with the community. Collaboration will not be as direct but rather by means of raising funds, taking part in charity organization as an initiative from the school or collecting non perished food or blankets. The parent will support such opportunities given that the school initiate the project.

### **6.3.3.7 Visibility at school**

Being visible at school activities is important for parents to show their support for their children. Furthermore, it creates an opportunity to meet new people and to interact with the teacher. However it is important that being visible at school activities will be done for the correct reasons and motivation. Balance is the key word here and tipping the scale may cause an uncomfortable situation for the child and the teacher.

### **6.3.4 QUESTIONNAIRES**

Teachers react indifferent if parental involvement at school influence the child's success at school. Answers varied from yes, definitely to not necessarily and that the parent can inspire the child. One teacher believes that involved parents do not necessarily have the most successful children. Parental involvement can improve the functioning of the school and should not benefit one child above another. In the case of academics it certainly helps if the parent is involved and it is then when the teacher need the parent most.

## **6.4 TEACHERS PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Teachers perceive that parental involvement is important for the development of the child, that the school function better with the support of the parent and it forms a bond between parent, teacher and child. The motivation for parents to get involved is their children, which are their most valuable asset, and that each parent only wants the best for their child. Teachers perceive that parents want to support the child and school. Furthermore, parental involvement creates an environment for effective learning and an atmosphere for growth and enthusiasm.

However, teachers perceive that parental involvement must be managed. Parental involvement place parents in a position to benefit the child and it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between supporting the school and supporting the child. Parental involvement must be child centered and not interfere with the management of the school by means of dictating. It can be uncomfortable for both the teacher and the child if there is not a balance.

I have found that teachers tend to focus more on the visible side of parental involvement such as attending and volunteering and less on supporting and monitoring. Furthermore, an absent parent is not necessarily an uninvolved parent. One must not be mistaken that a parent that is not visible at school is not involved at all. The challenge is thus to balance the different perception of parents and teachers there by supporting and trying to understanding each other's perception. The focus of the parent and teacher must be to work together with each other in sharing the same perception regarding involvement in the learners' school career. If the teacher accepting that monitoring and supporting at home is as important as attending and volunteering at school is a good way of starting to see each other's view.

## **6.5 PARENTS PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents perceive parental involvement as important and that their main reason for becoming involved is to support their child. Thus, the parent will support the child and the school will only benefit from the support the parent have for the school, because the school is part of the child's environment.

Parents perceive that involvement does not necessary entail attending opportunities boasted by the school. Attending school events sprouts from being a devoted parent and not so much being involved in the school's organisation. Parents perceive that monitoring and supporting at home does not make their involvements less meaningful, but it is also as important as volunteering at, and attending school involvement opportunities. Parents perceive that their involvement shows that they are supporting their child by creating a positive environment for their children.

Communication is perceived as an important factor for the basis of parental involvement. In almost every division - literature, policies, interviews and questionnaires – in this study communication came to the fore ground. Parents replied that involvement opened a door of communication between the parent and the school and the parent and other parents. Communication should always be in a supportive and positive manner.

Parents perceive that the teacher's encouragement plays a role in how much a parent will support or volunteer as it is in the parents' means to support and if it fits into their schedule, they will support and volunteer. As for support, parents said that they will support the teacher, the learner, sport activities and the mission and vision of the school by means of attending school activities.

Parents perceive that involvement at home constitutes a broader term for parents as they are involved in more areas than just school. They are involved in different facets of their child's upbringing. They want to be available for their and if everything is in place at home the child will feel safe and thereby the parent will do their best to make the best of every day for their child.

The two determinates that I have found as being the most influential reasons for parents being involved is parents supporting their children and communication. This high level of support for their children from the quintile five parent forms the basis for a high percentage of parental involvement. Subsequently, quintile five primary schools creates opportunities to fulfill these high expectations of parents as part of the quintile five primary school's yearly objectives and usually forms part of the school's ethos.

Thus, in my view one must not underestimate the role the school play by means of opportunities and communication, in defying the perception parents have of their involvement.

The teachers' involvement and support leans towards the school.

## **6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations were discussed in Chapter 1, and I briefly summarise here. Only Quintile five primary schools were chosen for this study, but it does not imply that lesser quintile schools have less parental involvement than a quintile five primary school.

Some limitations to the study are the use of a qualitative research design method. The data were constructing by means of a semi structured interview and questionnaire. This method of study tends to work with relatively small number of cases (Silverman 2000). Furthermore Silverman

(2000) states that qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for detail. It is because of this notion that I only interviewed a small number of parents and only a few teachers were completing the questionnaire.

Furthermore, a school that was requested to take part in the interview refused, reasoning that doing interviews regarding parental involvement is a sensitive matter. By not allowing the study, it may be that parental involvement studies in that particular quintile five primary school may pose as a risk. Exploration of the risks could have added to the findings of this study.

## **6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

The following recommendations emanate from this study:

- What is the impact of parents' support expectations in a quintile five primary school on the teachers' work load?
- What is the impact of parents' support expectations in a quintile five primary school on the teachers' moral?
- Is there a correlation between the monetary aspect of schooling and the expectations parent have?

## **6.9 CONCLUSION**

Parents perceive parental involvement as supporting their child. Communication also forms an important part of involvement. One should therefore, from an educational perspective, change the way on how parental involvement is communicated to parents. Education role players should speak of parental support rather than parental involvement. Parental support entails a much broader concept than involvement and many parents will feel more comfortable to support their child rather than to be involved with the quintile five primary school as such. Teachers will also encourage support and will feel less intimidated from parents' involvement. From a research perspective, all future studies on the subject of parental involvement should be seen as parental support.

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