



Thesis
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SOUTH AFRICA

**The Development of a Programme
for parental Involvement in Senior
Primary School in Swaziland**

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAMME FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN
SENIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SWAZILAND

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by

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Declaration

"I declare that THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAMME FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SENIOR PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SWAZILAND is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references".



L.C. Monadjem

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Ara and my sons Keyan and Damian.

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Summary

Parental involvement (PI) greatly benefits learners of all ages. The implementation of a PI programme would provide an effective and affordable means to address the needs of learners in Swaziland. The purpose of this study was to develop a PI programme for urban primary education in Swaziland.

The literature revealed that while comprehensive PI programmes are most effective, PI in learning activities in the home and an appropriate parenting style are particularly beneficial and correlate more closely with learning success than family background factors. Nevertheless, a relationship between family background factors and PI exists. Furthermore there are numerous barriers to PI. However, the most important determinant of PI is the effort of teachers to involve parents. PI is particularly important at senior primary level, the level at which PI drops off spontaneously.

In order to gain a more complete understanding of PI in this community, which would form the basis for an effective PI programme, a combined quantitative and qualitative approach was undertaken. A parental questionnaire was used to test quantitatively the effects of family background factors on three measures of PI and to determine the ways in which parents were involved, their attitudes to the schools, and the schools' efforts to involve them. Teacher and parent interviews and focus discussions were conducted following a qualitative ethnographic approach.

The integrated quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a low level of PI. As a result of a lack of relevant policy, Swazi teachers had very little understanding of PI or their role in establishing it. Thus, schools generally practiced Swap's Protective Model such that parents had very few opportunities, and little encouragement, to become involved. Consequently, parents did not fully

appreciate the importance of their involvement and did not always choose to become involved. The study revealed a number of barriers that further interfered with their involvement.

The implications of the findings were discussed and recommendations for a PI programme that harnesses the strengths and addresses the weaknesses of this community were made. In order to improve educational practice, recommendations targeted each role player and type of PI separately.

Key terms: parental involvement; parental involvement programme; parental attitude; primary school; Swaziland; quantitative research; qualitative research; parental questionnaire; parent interviews; teacher interviews.

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List of acronyms

PI	Parental involvement
SIPI	School initiated parental involvement
PIPI	Parent initiated parental involvement
PAS	Parental attitude to the school
SES	Socioeconomic status
PTA	Parent-teacher association
RSA	Republic of South Africa
USA	United States of America

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Chapter **1**

Introductory orientation, problem statement and methodology

"A good parent is a national treasure and we need to make parents and families partners with their children's teachers and principals in the process of education" (Riley 1994 in Edge 1998:308).

1.1 The rationale of this study

1.1.1 Education in Swaziland

The government of Swaziland prioritises education (Imfundvo Eswatini (IE) 1994:i). Approximately one third of the national recurrent budget is spent on education and a great deal of effort has been made to improve the quality and accessibility of education in the last few decades (IE 1994:ii). Considerable advances in these respects have been achieved (IE 1994:i). Nevertheless many problems remain.

Swaziland, like many other African countries, is not a wealthy country. Almost all learners, 98%, attend either government or aided schools (Swaziland government educational statistics (SGES) 2001:7) which face serious financial problems (IE 1994:iii). These schools lack qualified teaching staff, facilities and instructional materials (IE 1994:12).

Largely as a result of these financial constraints and the increasing demand placed on education by population growth, the Swaziland education system is not coping with the needs of all its learners at present (IE 1994:iii). On average 16% of learners repeat each primary grade and almost 9% of learners drop out of school at the end of each primary grade (SGES 2001:30). Only 50% of Swazi children complete their primary education, many taking as long as 12 years to do so (Development Plan (DP) 1998:172). The situation deteriorates further at high school level (SGES 2001:30).

Prince Khuzulwandle, then the Minister of Education, noted, "The importance of bringing about efficiencies in the system, that is to say, doing more with less, is more critical now than at any time since regaining our independence" (IE 1994:iii).

In order to make the system more efficient and meet the needs of more learners, the Ministry of Education has focussed on introducing continuous assessment, improving teacher training, and economic and administrative restructuring (IE 1994:40-41).

1.1.2 Benefits of parental involvement

Many governments and districts have recognised the need for legislation to ensure that parents are intensively involved in their children's education (McKenna & Willms 1998:19-20). This recognition is based upon the realisation that parents have a right to play an active role in their children's education, that parental involvement may help to alleviate some of the problems faced by disadvantaged learners, and that parental involvement benefits all the participants of education, particularly the learners (McKenna & Willms 1998:20-22).

Positive child outcomes as a result of parental involvement have included improved academic achievement, improved school readiness, greater motivation and a more positive attitude to school, fewer years of special education, lower rates of grade retention, lower school drop-out rates, better school attendance and, fewer behaviour problems (Epstein 1987a:128; Tijus, Santolini & Danis 1997:7; Miedel & Reynolds 1999:379). Benefits to teachers include improved relationships with learners and their parents, fewer behaviour problems, reduced workload, and a more positive attitude to teaching (Epstein 1987b:5; Swap 1993:10; Lazar & Slostad 1999:209). Better parent-child relationships and increased parental self-esteem and confidence in school-related activities also result from increased parental involvement (Robson & Hunt 1999:185).

1.1.3 Parental involvement in Swaziland

Cullingford and Morrison (1999:253-254) note that the government and schools of the United Kingdom recognise the benefits of parental involvement in education and the necessity of encouraging as much of it as possible. This also seems to be the case in many other countries including the United States (Epstein 1991:345), Australia (Reeve 1993:1), and Canada (McKenna & Willms 1998:21). However, the essential role of parents in their children's education is largely unrecognised in Swaziland.

Efforts to improve the quality of education in Swaziland have not included parental involvement (DP 1998:171-187) and the *National Policy Statement on Education* (NPSE 1998:1-14) includes no specific parental involvement policy. Thus, despite the difficulties faced by Swazi education and the extraordinary benefits of parental involvement, the involvement of Swazi parents in their children's education is being neglected.

This is particularly unfortunate, since parental involvement has not simply been found to be one of the most effective ways to improve the quality of education, but also one of the most cost effective (Epstein 1991:349; Desimone 1999:12; van der Werf, Creemers & Guldemont 2001:447). Although effective parental involvement does require a modest budget (Epstein 1991:349) it has been found to be more effective and cheaper than interventions centering on teacher development, improvements in educational management, or books and learning materials (van der Werf *et al* 2001:461). Thus, parental involvement is a particularly suitable means for improving education in developing countries like Swaziland.

Further, while it is almost impossible for educators to address sources of educational disadvantage that stem from family background factors such as

poverty, ethnicity, and lack of parental education, the degree to which parents are involved in their children's education is changeable (Zellman & Waterman 1998:379; Desimone 1999:12). Good parental involvement programmes have been shown to substantially increase the levels and types of parental involvement occurring at schools (Epstein 1995:703). Moreover, some types of parental involvement have been found to have a greater effect on school achievement than family background variables (Jantjes 1995:295). Thus, increased parental involvement may provide an avenue to address the problems of disadvantaged Swazi children.

Consequently, a programme that enables Swazi parents to become effectively involved in their children's education would provide a practical and cost effective means to address Swaziland's educational deficiencies.

1.2 The importance of this study

1.2.1 Benefits of the parental involvement programme to the learners, parents and teachers

This study hopes to find manageable ways of involving Swazi parents in their children's education to the benefit of learners, and also their parents and teachers. This development of recommendations for a programme of parental involvement for Swaziland is intended to enable educators, through its implementation, to help learners achieve better academic results, and decrease the high failure and drop-out rates in Swaziland. In addition, it is hoped that the implementation of this involvement programme will result in learners who are more motivated, better behaved, and more self-confident (Rogers 1989:38; Miedel & Reynolds 1999:381-382).

Further, through the implementation of this programme it is hoped that the parents themselves will recognize the importance of their own role in their children's education, feel confident and comfortable in this role, build better relationships with teachers and their children, and take ownership of the school (Jantjes 1995:297-298). Teachers, in turn, should have fewer behaviour problems from learners in class, better achieving learners and support from parents and, thus, feel more content in, and positive about, their roles (Jantjes 1995:298). Thus this study should be of great benefit to the participants of education.

1.2.2 Focus of the study

Most studies on parental involvement have focused on early childhood education because this is a life-stage at which learners are maximally sensitive to home and school influences (Entwisle & Alexander 1992:73). However, most Swazi children have no access to education before primary school (IE 1994:7). Further, the benefits of parent involvement extend throughout all levels of schooling (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:75). Moreover, parents tend to stop being spontaneously involved in their children's education, and teachers tend to make less effort to involve them, when their children reach the senior primary level (Stouffer 1992:5). Consequently, this study shall focus on learners in senior primary school and should thus, shed light on parental involvement in this less studied but critical phase.

Moreover, this study focuses on urban primary schools. Urban and rural schools in other countries have been found to differ in terms of the degree to, and the ways in which, parents are involved in their children's education (Heystek & Louw 1999:21). Although urban primary schools only make up 25% of the primary schools in Swaziland, this is the fastest growing school sector and is

consequently of particular interest (IE 1994:28).

Further, this study is of interest since virtually no research on parental involvement has been done in Swaziland. Swaziland shares similarities with South Africa and, like other developing countries in Africa, suffers from limited resources and the legacy of colonisation. Nevertheless, Swaziland is unique in several important respects. Swaziland is a Kingdom, in which Chiefs hold sway over local communities. Further, it stands out in Africa in that its population is largely homogenous in terms of culture, language, and religion with almost 99% of the population being black, siSwati speaking, Christian people (Swaziland Annual Statistical Bulletin (SASB) 1999:8). Thus, Swaziland does not face the problems of cultural diversity faced by so many other countries in Africa. This study is the first to focus on parental involvement in this unique country.

1.3 Summary of the rationale and importance of the study

Despite the prioritisation of the provision of quality education to all learners by the government of Swaziland, not all learners' needs are being met. In primary education alone a considerable proportion of learners repeat each year and 50% of learners do not complete their primary education.

Improvements in the education system to date have not focused on increased parental involvement. However, considerable benefits to the learner, including higher grades and lower drop-out rates, result from parental involvement. Consequently, parental involvement provides a means to help Swazi learners achieve their potential. Moreover, parental involvement is a particularly effective means of improving learner outcomes because, unlike many family background variables that influence academic success, it is teachable and changeable. Further, parental involvement is cost effective and thus, suited to financially

constrained developing countries like Swaziland.

Thus the importance of this study lies primarily in its aim to develop recommendations for the design of an effective parental involvement programme that will help to address the deficiencies of the Swazi primary education system. In addition this study addresses the barely studied involvement of parents in Swaziland at senior primary level, the level at which spontaneous parental involvement tends to decrease, and focuses on the fastest growing education sector, urban primary schools.

1.4 Problem statement

This study attempts to answer the question:

"What form should a parental involvement programme take in order to maximally benefit Swazi urban primary school learners, their parents, and teachers?"

In order to develop recommendations for the design of an effective parental involvement programme for this community a number of further sub-questions must be answered.

1.4.1 Sub-questions

- 1) Does family background influence the amount of effort made by the teachers and schools to involve parents in their children's education?
- 2) Does family background influence the extent to which parents are involved in their children's education?
- 3) In what ways do schools attempt to involve parents in their children's education?
- 4) In what ways are parents involved in their children's education?

- 5) What are teachers' feelings about, experiences, beliefs and perceptions of parental involvement?
- 6) What are parents' feelings about, experiences, beliefs and perceptions of parental involvement?
- 7) What factors form barriers to the involvement of parents?
- 8) How can this information be integrated and combined with the literature to yield recommendations for the design of an effective parent involvement programme for urban senior primary schools in Swaziland?

1.4.2 Definitions of key terms

1.4.2.1 Parents

"Parents" refers not only to a child's mother or father but includes all the caregivers that provide children with basic care, support, protection and guidance (Jantjes 1995:300). Thus, this understanding of parents includes the wider family as well as any other unrelated persons who care for the child. This broader definition encourages schools to acknowledge a variety of family types and household structures and, thus, to develop a versatile range of caregiver involvement practices (van Wyk 2001:117).

1.4.2.2 Parent participation

"Parent participation" refers to the equal partnership between the school and the parents in children's education across all six of Epstein's (1995:704) types of parental involvement (see 2.2).

1.4.2.3 Parental involvement

"Parental involvement" is more limited and refers to the involvement of parents in one or more of Epstein's (1995:704) six types of parental involvement activities, but not to a full partnership between parents and the school (see 2.2).

1.4.2.4 Parental involvement programme

"Parental involvement programme" refers to any programme that is deliberately designed to involve parents in their children's education in a systematic, structured and organised way (Hara & Burke 1998:10).

1.4.2.5 School

"School" refers to the personnel of the school including teachers, head-teachers, and administrators, as well as the school structure.

1.4.2.6 Urban areas

"Urban areas" are those areas under the control of Town Councils or Central Government (SASB 1999:2). These areas are characterised by high population, housing, and school densities (IE 1994:28-29; SASB 1999: 2, 12).

1.5 Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to develop recommendations for the design of an effective parental involvement programme suited to Swazi urban senior primary school education such that learners in particular, but also their teachers and parents, would derive the greatest possible benefits from the implementation of this programme.

1.6 Research methodology

This study combines the use of quantitative and qualitative methodology in order to acquire a more complete understanding of parental involvement in Swazi senior urban primary schools on which an effective parental involvement

programme can be based (De Vos 2002:364-365).

1.6.1 Quantitative methodology

The parental involvement literature on studies done in other countries is reviewed. Quantitative methodology is used to test hypotheses designed to determine whether generalisations about differences in the involvement of parents with different family backgrounds also apply to the parents of Swazi urban senior primary school children. A self-rating parental questionnaire based upon one used by Sitole (1993:146-148) in South Africa is used to measure the involvement of learners' parents from Swazi urban primary schools. The questionnaire also includes a biographical section. Factor analysis is done to confirm the division of the self-rating items into determinants of parental involvement. Several hypotheses are tested statistically against each of these determinants of parental involvement.

Further, the percentage of parents who gave each scaled response is calculated. This indicates the attitude of parents to the school, the ways in which parents are involved, and the ways in which the school invites parents to be involved in their children's education.

1.6.2 Qualitative methodology

Qualitative methodology is used to provide depth and detail to the more generalisable but also more superficial view of parental involvement revealed by the quantitative research (Firestone 1987:20). The qualitative methodology provides detailed information on the subjective meanings, beliefs and perspectives of a small group of teachers and parents. Descriptive qualitative

research following an ethnographic approach is conducted. Semi-structured individual teacher and parent interviews, and unstructured focus group discussions are done. Observation plays a minor but important role in the qualitative research. Interviews are recorded by video camera, transcribed verbatim, and sorted into themes, which arose both out of the data and the theory on parental involvement. Analysed data are presented as readable narrative descriptions and accompanying interpretations.

The quantitative and qualitative data are integrated and grounded inferences generated from the qualitative findings tested against the quantitative data. Thus, triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative findings is done.

1.7 Chapter division

This study comprises the following chapters:

Chapter 1 provides an introductory orientation to the study and its methodology.

In **Chapter 2** the literature on parental involvement in other countries is reviewed. Definitions of parental involvement and parental participation are discussed. The categorisation of parental involvement is reviewed and the benefits of Epstein's six types of parental involvement are examined. How parental involvement works and its determinants are discussed. Factors that influence the degree to which parents are involved are elucidated including the theories on the extent to which parents should be involved. The focus of parental involvement research, as well as criticisms of parental involvement programmes and research, are presented.

Chapter 3 focuses on what is known about parental involvement in Swaziland and South Africa. A brief exposition of the education system of Swaziland is

given. The parental involvement policies of Swaziland and South Africa, and their implementation, are discussed. The findings of parental involvement research in this region are presented.

Chapter 4 describes the methods and methodologies used in this study. The justification, rationale, and purposes of combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies is elucidated. A discussion of quantitative and qualitative methodologies follows. Issues of validity and reliability for both methodologies individually and in combination, as well as the ethics of the study, are considered.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the quantitative results. The findings of the factor and item analysis are disclosed and discussed. The results of the testing of each hypothesis are divulged and discussed. Further, the parents' attitudes to the schools, the ways in which parents were involved in their children's education, and the efforts of school and teachers to involve parents, are exposed and discussed.

In **Chapter 6** the qualitative findings are presented and are discussed in relation to the quantitative findings. Parental involvement in each of Epstein's six types of involvement is exposed and discussed and explanations for the current picture of parental involvement in Swaziland are elucidated. A comprehensive picture of parental involvement in Swazi urban primary schools is presented and summarised.

The final chapter, **Chapter 7**, presents the recommendations for a parental involvement programme for urban senior primary education in Swaziland, based on the combined qualitative and quantitative findings and the literature on parental involvement programmes. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2

Parental involvement in education

"Long ago the notices which said, "No parents beyond this point" have disappeared. They are welcomed into schools. They are seen as potential partners in education" (Cullingford & Morrison 1999:253).

2.1 Introduction

Traditionally public education has been the preserve of centralised bureaucracies that have mostly excluded non-professional participation in shaping educational policy and practice (Dimmock, O'Donaghue & Robb 1996:17). The role of parents was proscribed by the school and limited to such activities as helping with homework, dealing with discipline problems, joining the parent-teacher association (PTA), contributing to fundraising events, and visiting teachers at the school at times organised and specified by the school (Christenson, Rounds & Franklin 1992a:39; Jantjes 1995:300). This sort of involvement has, since, been condemned by educators as contrived and superficial (Zellman & Waterman 1998:370).

Since the onset of the 1960's and 1970's arguments for wider parental involvement in education began to receive attention (Dimmock *et al* 1996:6). The case for parental involvement is now widely accepted in many countries (Epstein 1991:347; Wehlburg 1996:126; Dimmock *et al* 1996:17; McKenna & Willms 1998:19). The eighth United States of America (USA) education goal in Goals 2000 states that, "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (United States Department of Education 1994 in Miedel & Reynolds 1999:380).

Many governments now have legislation to ensure that parents are more intensively involved in their children's education (Wehlburg 1996:126; Dimmock *et al* 1996:17). The reasons for this are threefold. Firstly there has been an ideological shift towards the idea that parents are entitled to play an active role in their children's education rather than simply being bystanders (Mkwanzazi 1994:25; Downer 1996:43; Wolfendale 1999:164). Secondly, a great deal of evidence suggests that parents, learners and teachers all benefit from increased

parental involvement (Zellman & Waterman 1998:371). Lastly, it is believed that increased parental involvement may help alleviate some of the problems faced by communities in which the material, emotional and/or educational needs of children are not being met, and promote equity and equality among these disadvantaged communities (Dimmock *et al* 1996:6; McKenna & Willms 1998:22). Parental involvement is believed to be a particularly suitable way to address these problems as it is far easier to manipulate than other sources of inequality such as family income or ethnicity (Desimone 1999:12).

In this chapter parental involvement in education will be defined and discussed.

2.2 Definitions of parental involvement and parental participation

Parental involvement and parental participation are used synonymously in a great number of studies (Reeve 1993:4). Furthermore, both terms are often used to describe a wide variety of parent behaviors some of which take place at the home while others take place in the school (Wehlburg 1996:125). This range of behaviours includes activities as diverse as working in the school canteen, fulfilling children's basic needs, providing clerical support for teachers, attending social activities, supervising children on school excursions, helping with homework, making important decisions on the nature of the curriculum, and so forth (Reeve 1993:2).

The Australians have classified parent activities into two types. Those which involve parents voluntarily supporting the school are defined as "parent involvement", while those which consider the parents to be partners in their children's education and give parents a direct role in decision-making at classroom, school or state level are defined as "parent participation" (Reeve 1993:4-5). Nevertheless, there is a great deal of disagreement on what parent

participation actually means, especially on the type and amount of power parents should really have. There are very few advocates of parent participation who truly see parents as equal partners in their children's education (Reeve 1993:10).

Parental participation, for the purposes of this dissertation, is defined as nothing less than the equal partnership between parents and the school. Under this definition parental participation is a comprehensive and inclusive term that includes all types of parental behaviours both at the home and in the school that relate to a child's education, and it includes decision-making as equal partners. Parental involvement is more limited and refers to the involvement of parents in one or more parent activities but not to a full partnership between the parents and school. By this definition the majority of programmes have focused on parental involvement and very few have attempted true parental participation (McKenna & Willms 1998:36).

Even with this understanding of the difference between parental involvement and parental participation, the terms are still vague because they include so many different parent activities, resulting in the fact that parental involvement may mean quite different things to different people (Wehlburg 1996:125). Thus, it is necessary to define parental involvement more operationally by dividing it into different categories.

2.3 Categorisation of types of parental involvement activities

As mentioned, a wide variety of parental behaviours have been ascribed to the term parental involvement. Researchers have divided these behaviours into a variety of categories.

Factor analysis led Ho and Willms (1996:132) to conclude that parental participation includes four dimensions: home discussion; school communication; home supervision; and school participation.

Grolnick and Sloweiaczek (1994:237) theorised three categories of parental involvement. Firstly, behavioural involvement which includes activities at the school and participating in educational activities at home. Secondly, personal involvement which helps children affectively and creates positive attitudes towards schooling and positive self-concepts. This category includes all behaviours that show care about the children's affective experiences in and out of school. The third category is intellectual involvement and this refers to cognitively stimulating activities such as reading books and discussing current events.

Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1987:429), theorised a two-way split into home-based activities and school-based parent involvement activities.

Gordon (1976:7-8) breaks parental participation into five types of involvement: the traditional type of parental involvement, parents as by-standers or the audience; the parents as decision makers; the parents as classroom volunteers; the parents as paid paraprofessionals or teacher's aides; and the parents as learners and teachers of their own children at home.

Factor analysis by Gettinger and Guetschow (1998:38) grouped parental involvement activities into two roles. Roles in which parents have direct contact or involvement with their children, such as reading to them, and roles in which involvement is indirect with less direct benefit for the children specifically, such as attending open-house meetings.

Epstein (1987b:5) identified 5 types of parental involvement that are critical to positive child outcomes. Type 1 was the basic obligations of parents, which included child support, parenting style and the provision of suitable home conditions for learning. Type 2 was the basic obligations of the school and focused on communication. Type 3 was parental involvement at the school and included volunteering to assist teachers and administrators, and attending learner performances and other events, at the school. Type 4 referred to parent involvement in learning activities at the home. The 5th type of parent involvement was in government and advocacy and referred to the parents' roles as decision-makers at the school, district or state level. Later a 6th type of parental involvement, collaboration and exchange with community organisations, was included (Epstein & Dauber 1991:291). Since this time Epstein (1995:704) has refined the definitions of these categories and renamed some of them.

All of these authors have provided evidence suggesting that their particular categories of parental involvement play critical roles in child outcomes. Unsurprisingly, many of these categorisations overlap, and all provide greater insight into the phenomenon of parental involvement. However as Epstein's typology of six types of parent involvement is the most widely used and accepted (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995:317; McKenna & Willms 1998:19) it shall form the framework of this chapter.

Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation parental involvement in education is defined as the parents' involvement in one or more of Epstein's (1995:704) six renamed categories. Namely, parenting (basic obligations of the parent), communication (basic obligations of the school), parent involvement at the school, parent involvement in learning activities at the home, decision-making (government or advocacy), and/or collaboration and exchange with community organisations.

2.4 The benefits and practice of Epstein's six types of parental involvement in education.

2.4.1 Introduction

A great many studies have shown positive child outcomes as the result of parental involvement programmes across a wide range of populations (Wehlburg 1996:125; Izzo, Weissberg & Kaspro 1999:834; Ma 1999:61). While positive child outcomes have included improved academic achievement, this is just one of the many positive results of parental involvement for the child (Epstein 1995:707). Other positive child outcomes are: a more positive attitude to school; greater school readiness; greater motivation; fewer behaviour problems; more regular homework habits; a lower drop-out rate for school as whole as well as in some specific subjects; a lower rate of placement and fewer years in special education classes; and lower grade retention (Epstein 1987a:128; McKenna & Willms 1998:22; Lazar & Slostad 1999:206; Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple & Peay 1999:422). Educators have also described a role for parental involvement in the prevention of suicide in adolescents (Mullins 1999:8).

In addition a number of benefits for the teacher have been shown such as reduced work load, improved relationships with both parents and learners, fewer discipline problems, a more positive attitude to teaching, less stress, and higher ratings by parents in terms of interpersonal skills and overall teaching abilities (Epstein 1987b:5; Swap 1993:10; Lazar & Slostad 1999:209).

Parents have also been shown to benefit from parental involvement programmes, which result in better parent-school (Comer & Haynes 1991:272) and parent-child relationships (Overett & Donald 1998:353). Parents are also more confident in their ability and right to play an effective positive role in their children's education (Olmsted 1991:224-225; Overett & Donald 1998:355;

Whiteford 1998:66), have a better understanding of what is happening in the school (Epstein 1986:288) and show greater satisfaction in the type of education their children are receiving (Stouffer1992:6).

In this section, Epstein's (1995:704) six types of parental involvement are defined, and their benefits and practice discussed. Most authors agree that the more comprehensive the programme, the more types of involvement it includes both in the home and at school, the greater the benefits (Ascher 1988:113; Heleen 1992:6; Christenson *et al* 1992b:192). Nevertheless, these six types of parental involvement will be discussed separately for three reasons.

Firstly, many studies have focussed on only one or a few types of parental involvement and have, thus, revealed only the benefits of those particular types. For example Levine's (1998:377) programme focussed on parent education workshops, while Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) studied parent involvement in school activities.

Secondly, even the more comprehensive programmes of parental involvement such as those of Comer and Haynes (1991:273) and Hara and Burke (1998:14) are almost never fully comprehensive and often include quite different sets of parental involvement activities. Consequently, it is difficult to compare these programmes when they are considered as a whole.

Thirdly, a great deal of evidence supports the contention that different types of parental involvement have different effects (Epstein 1987b:5; Ma 1999:75) and that parents who show high levels of one type of involvement do not necessarily show high levels of other types of involvement (McKenna & Willms 1998: 22). Further, fully comprehensive parental involvement programmes are not easy to implement (Epstein 1991:348-349). Thus, it is important to know exactly which types of parental involvement activities are most beneficial so that educators can

choose the most appropriate activities to implement. In addition, evidence suggests different parental involvement activities may have different effects over time (Ma 1999:76).

Nevertheless, while the benefits of these six types of parental involvement are considered separately in the following sections, it must be remembered that many parental involvement activities combine aspects of more than one type of parental involvement (Epstein 1995:707).

Unfortunately, the benefits of the six types of parental involvement are not always fully realised as a result of the ways that parents, teachers, and schools practice them. Research on the ways these types of parental involvement are commonly practiced is also discussed in this section.

2.4.2 Parenting

Epstein (1987a:121-123) states that it is the parents' basic obligation to provide for their children's needs such as food, shelter, health and safety. Parents must prepare their children for school and continue parenting throughout childhood and adolescence. Parenting includes an appropriate parenting style, parental supervision, and home conditions that will enable children to become self-confident, self-reliant, responsible individuals who display appropriate behaviour and are able to learn (Epstein 1987b:5). The parents must also supply the children's school related requirements such as school supplies and a place to work (Epstein 1987a:121).

A great deal of evidence suggests that parenting is a particularly beneficial form of parental involvement (Zellman & Waterman 1998:379). Furthermore, it is virtually impossible for teachers to change parents' socioeconomic status (SES)

and other related family background variables, such as marital status or ethnicity. However, research suggests that it is possible to help parents improve their parenting which has, in many cases, been found to have a greater effect on school achievement than family background variables (Schleicher 1992:28; Jantjes 1995:295-296; Zellman & Waterman 1998:379). Dornbusch and Ritter (1992:123) state, "What parents and families do is even more important than what families and parents are".

Epstein (1986:280-281) found that over 97% of the parents she surveyed reported that their children had school supplies and over 90% said their children had a regular place to do homework. A positive relationship has been found between parents that provide school-based learning materials and books for their young children at home and learner achievement (Shaver & Walls 1994:90).

Jantjes (1995:297-298) observed that improving home environment increased learner's school achievement, parents' confidence to consult teachers, and their understanding of their children, and resulted in closer relationships between parents and school staff. Such improvements in home environment have been shown to have lasting effects (Keeves in Jantjes 1995:299).

Zellman and Waterman (1998:370) found that a positive parenting style was more important for the children's reading achievement and lack of learning problems than the extent to which parents were involved at school. Researchers have argued for some time that parenting style moderates the impact of parent involvement by influencing the degree to which the child is open to the parent and the nature of the parent-child interaction (Zellman & Waterman 1998:379). Parenting through anxious pressure on the child relates negatively to child achievement (Georgiou 1999:425). There is a great deal of evidence that children are more successful in school when their parents adopt an authoritative parenting style and accept, nurture, encourage, and are emotionally responsive

to their children (Dornbusch & Ritter 1992:120; Christenson, Rounds & Gorney 1992b:187-188).

High parental expectations and aspirations have been shown to have positive effects on a number of educational outcomes including scholastic achievement (Christenson *et al* 1992b:183; Sitole 1993: 68; Fan 2001:27). Fan (2001:57) found parents educational aspirations to have a strong positive effect on learners' academic growth regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity. This researcher theorises that these aspirations may translate into educationally beneficial activities and behaviours throughout a child's life. Parental expectations have been found to be a more powerful predictor of high school completion than socioeconomic status (Ainley 1995:35).

Zellman & Waterman (1998:378) found that parenting enthusiasm contributes significantly to the mother's involvement at school but not to the child's reading achievement or degree of learning problems. They conclude that enthusiasm may operate as a motivator of parental rather than child behaviours. It is however, quite possible that parental enthusiasm may result in some other positive child outcome such as a more positive attitude to school.

Children whose parents attribute their achievement to the children's own effort have been found to have better academic results than those whose parents attribute their achievement to luck, ability or other people (Georgiou 1999:424).

Home supervision which includes structuring children's time for homework, modeling children's learning, encouraging children to read at home, and limiting children's time to watch television, also results in a number of positive child outcomes (Christenson *et al* 1992b:185-186). On the other hand, Ma (1999: 25) found home supervision to have no effect on learner dropout rate for high school mathematics.

Parenting skills can be targeted in workshops. Attendance of parents at school-based parent training and information workshops has been positively correlated with positive learner academic achievements (Shaver & Walls 1998: 95) and other benefits to the learner and parent (Smith 1993:19; McKenna & Willms 1998:31).

2.4.3 Communication

Both school to home communication, where teachers inform the parents about school programmes and children's progress, and home to school communication, where parents contact teachers about their children's school life, have been correlated with positive child outcomes (Epstein 1995:706). They are believed to be of benefit to all participants in the education process (Swan & Newhouse 1998:19). In fact, no parent involvement programme can succeed without effective communication between the home and school (Friedman 1973:118).

Effective communication includes the use of formal and informal letters, report cards, memos, telephone calls, the use of the internet, parent-teacher meetings, home visits, workshops, and parent-teacher association meetings (Sitole 1993:5; Jones 1988:9; McKenna & Willms 1998: 31; Trahan & Lawler-Prince 1999:66).

Teacher communications can increase many forms of parental involvement (Watkins 1997:12). Research suggests that parents actually want more information about what their children are doing at school and how to support them (Crozier 1999:322).

However, most of the communication between parents and teachers occurs with parents whose children are experiencing some kind of behavioural or learning problem or with parents who have already shown an interest in helping their

children (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76; Ho & Willms 1996:138). Unfortunately, few teachers want more contact with parents of children without problems (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76). Epstein (1986:281) found in her survey that a large number of parents were not involved in some of the most common, traditional communications of the school. More than one third had no conference with the teacher during the year and almost two-thirds never communicated with the teacher by phone. She found that while over 95% of teachers reported communication with parents, this communication was not deep, frequent, or detailed.

Furthermore, the communication that occurs between parents and schools often flows in only one direction, from the school to the parent (Epstein 1986:281). Teachers and schools frequently fail to appreciate that parents have their own expertise and unique knowledge of their children and thus, have a great deal to contribute to their children's education (Peressini 1998:578).

2.4.4 Parental involvement at the school

Parental involvement at the school includes assisting teachers in the classroom, on class trips or at class parties. Also included is parental assistance in the cafeteria, library, playground, computer lab and other areas where adult supervision is required, and assisting in fund raising, community relations and political awareness (Epstein 1987a:125). As a result this category is sometimes referred to as volunteering (Epstein 1995:704). However, parent involvement at the school also refers to parents' attendance of student performances, sports or other events at the school (Epstein 1987b:5).

Many studies have provided evidence that the presence of the parent as a volunteer in the classroom results in positive child outcomes at all levels of

education. Tijus *et al* (1997:7) found that parental involvement in pre-school classes enhanced the children's cognitive development. Ma's (1999:75) analysis suggested that parent volunteer work greatly reduces mathematics dropout in high school. Ho and Willms (1996:137), on the other hand, showed it to have a negligible effect on mathematics achievement in Grade 8 although it had a modest effect on reading achievement. Peressini (1998b:323) stated that, "Encouraging parents to become active in the mathematics classroom is a powerful way of helping them understand the changes in their children's mathematics education".

Miedel and Reynolds (1999:379-402) did a longitudinal study on parental involvement in preschool and kindergarten in activities at the school which included volunteering in the classroom, attending events at the school, attending school meetings or assemblies, going on field trips, and having parent-teacher conferences. They found that the number of these activities that the parents participated in was significantly associated with higher reading achievement, lower rates of grade retention, and fewer years of Special Education.

Dornbusch and Ritter (1988:76) found that high school children had slightly higher grades if their parents attended school functions. Even simply attending events such as drama and athletics had this effect (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76). Parents explained the positive relationship between their attendance and children's school grades as being due to them actively demonstrating that they value education and due to their having a better understanding of the school situation (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76).

Research by Epstein (1987a:125) suggested that having some parents at the school positively influenced teachers' interactions with other parents as the volunteers demonstrated parents' willingness to help, with the result that

teachers were encouraged to ask other parents to help their children with home-based learning activities.

However, several researchers have found little or no relationship between learner achievement and involvement at the school (Finn 1998: 23).

Research in Canada has indicated that most volunteering in schools occurs in the early grades (Ho & Willms in McKenna & Willms 1998:33) and tends to be limited to activities such as assistance with group teaching, library resource work, remedial teaching, clerical work, and supporting special education (Kompf & Dworet in McKenna & Willms 1998:33).

Epstein (1987a:125) noted that only about 4% of the parents in the American primary schools she studied were highly active at the school. The vast majority, 70%, never took part in parental activities at the school. She found that while most parents believed school involvement was important, relatively few felt they could assist at school. She points out that most parents cannot come to the school buildings to assist teachers or attend meetings during the school day.

2.4.5 Parental involvement in learning activities in the home

Parental involvement in the home includes helping with any learning activities by conducting discussions, reading to the child, playing educational games, and tutoring the child in specific skills (Epstein 1987a:126). These activities may be coordinated and directed by the teacher or initiated by the parent with or without the teacher's knowledge (Epstein 1987a:126). Involving the parent in learning activities in the home has been found to have the greatest positive impact on learner academic success of the six areas of parental involvement (Epstein 1987b:5; Hickman, Greenwood, & Miller 1995:129; McKenna & Willms 1998:22;

Desimone 1999:22; Izzo, *et al* 1999:835). Greenwood and Hickman (1991:279) claim that one half to two thirds of learners' achievement is accounted for by home, rather than school, variables. However, although parental involvement in the home is more beneficial than parent involvement at school (Finn 1998:20), the positive effects on the child of parental involvement are more comprehensive when the parents are involved both at home and at the school (Christenson *et al* 1992b:192). Involvement in the home has also been shown to have a greater impact on positive child outcomes than socioeconomic variables (Ho & Willms 1996:137).

Research by Ho and Willms (1996:137-138) led them to conclude that involvement in learning activities in the home, particularly home discussion, had the strongest relationship with academic achievement, while volunteering at the school or attending parent teacher association meetings had little effect on academic success. Home discussion also had a stronger effect on academic outcomes than monitoring of homework and supervisory activities. A number of other authors (Christenson *et al* 1992b:184-185; Muller 1998:347; Desimone 1999:23) have also provided evidence for positive effects of home discussion on learners' achievement. Home discussion includes verbal encouragement and guidance, mealtime conversation, and the discussion of the school programme and activities (Christenson *et al* 1992b: 184-185; Ho & Willms 1996:131).

Although the effectiveness of parental involvement in literacy activities has been being called into doubt (Sylva & Evans 1999:283) a great many studies support the idea that home reading activities increase reading achievement (Epstein 1987b:5; Christenson *et al* 1992b:192; Finn 1998:22). Moreover, teachers tend to try to involve parents in reading activities at home more than they try to involve them in other subjects (Epstein 1987b:5). Research suggests that paired reading may be a particularly effective way of involving parents in improving their children's language skills (Topping 1995:33-52).

Overett and Donald (1998:347-353) found that a paired reading programme involving parents and other family members resulted in significant improvements in learner reading accuracy and comprehension, and reading attitude. They also found evidence for the idea that positive relationships between the children and their parents were being nurtured, and that the mediation skills learnt by the parents were being widely practiced. All family members enjoyed the results. This finding is in line with those of many other studies which have found significant positive effects on children's word recognition, comprehension and attitude to reading as a result of parental involvement in paired reading (Topping 1995:12-39).

Even without parental training, simply reading to children from when they are very young establishes the fun and value of reading for them (Ballantine 1999:171).

Homework provides parents with an excellent opportunity to be involved in their children's education and stay informed in terms of what their children are learning at school (Cutright 1989:101). However, there have been some studies that have shown a relationship between negative learner outcomes and parents checking and helping with homework (Perkins & Milgram 1996: 197; Desimone 1999:24; Georgiou 1999:425). This may be because parents are more likely to check or help with homework if a child is already performing poorly at school (Desimone 1999:24). Alternatively, since many of these studies were done on adolescents for whom being helped with homework everyday may be developmentally inappropriate, this may account for the negative findings of these studies. Moreover, helping with homework has been found to be highly related to pressing and controlling types of parental styles and a pressing parenting style has been shown to have a negative relationship with child achievement (Georgiou 1999:424). The anxiety that is characteristic of this

parental style may motivate parents to help with homework but may also reduce the child's confidence in his ability, especially if the help was unsolicited (Georgiou 1999:425).

Nevertheless, a great deal of research suggests that parental involvement in well-designed interactive home learning activities improves learners' performance, attitudes, and behaviour (Bauch 1988:81-82; Epstein 1995:706-707; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995:315; Villas-Boas 1998:367; Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:187-189). Epstein (in Jones 2001:19) contends that the greatest impact on student achievement comes from family participation in well-designed at-home activities and this is true "regardless of the family, racial or cultural background or the parents' formal education".

Parents have been found to be interested in, and even enjoy, helping with homework and knowing what their children are doing at school (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow in Balli 1998:142). However, many parents do not know how to go about helping their children with homework (Trahan & Lawler-Prince 1999:65). Parents have complained that such help can drain their energy and patience and that inadequate skills can hinder their efforts (Hoover-Dempsey *et al* in Balli 1998:142). Watkins (1997:12) found that few parents were effective in helping their children. Thus, parents need to be shown how to help their children at home (Trahan & Lawler-Prince 1999:65). An understanding of their child's homework style and the provision of home conditions to match it, also increases the positive effects of parents involvement in homework (Perkins & Milgram 1996:201). Further, much homework is poorly designed with little thought given to involving parents effectively (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:182). To effectively involve parents homework must be well designed and purposefully intended to include parents (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:186).

Carey (1998:317-318) notes that specially made up home packages for learners and parents to work on together have been found to help learners master academic goals, become more confident and enthusiastic in specific subject areas, and have greater self-esteem. Parental enthusiasm and confidence are also increased. These home packages consist of manipulatives, books, games, puzzles, and/or other activities that are based on one or more school subjects. Such packages can be sent home by teachers with the child (Carey 1998:318) or made available in lending libraries (McCarty 1998:369).

Parental involvement in home learning activities is usually stronger during the early grades and is usually associated with literacy activities (McKenna & Willms 1998:34). Epstein (1986:282) found that more than 85% of parents spent 15 minutes or more at home helping their child when asked to do so by the teacher. Furthermore, parents said they would be willing to spend considerably more time helping their children at home if they were told how to. However, Epstein (1986:282) found that fewer than 25% of parents received frequent and systematic requests and directions from teachers to assist their children with specific skills.

2.4.6 Decision-making

Parents who play an active role in decision-making get a greater sense of ownership of the school, have better connections with other parents, and are more aware of education policies (McKenna & Willms 1998:23). In addition, a better fit between the needs of the children and school policies, curriculum and practices is expected, leading to improved learner attitudes to the school and better schooling outcomes (Ascher 1988:114; Epstein 1995:706; McKenna & Willms 1998:23). Numerous studies suggest, however, that because parent advocacy and decision-making are only weakly related to teaching and learning

they do not improve learner achievement or at least not directly and not in the short term (Brandt 1989:24; Lemmer 2000:61).

If parents are true partners in education they will be able to make decisions about things such as how the school spends its money, school discipline, staffing, curriculum, school policy, teaching strategies, school routines, and allocations of learners to different types of schools and programmes (McKenna & Willms 1998: 25).

Mkwanazi (1994:25) states that, "A central element of what constitutes meaningful parental involvement, is involvement of parents in the governance structures of the school". She states further that, "Any kind of involvement of parents in education that excludes involvement in these areas cannot be defined as "significant" parental involvement".

There is, however, still a great deal of debate in education circles about how parents should be involved in the overall governance of the school and precisely how much power they should have (Mkwanazi 1994:24; McKenna & Willms 1998:23). Some educators feel that limits must be placed on the parents' powers to make decisions while others believe a full partnership is essential (Reeve 1993:10; McGrath & Kurlikoff 1999:77).

Unfortunately, while the departments of education of various countries and provinces have attempted to increase parent involvement in decision-making (McKenna & Willms 1998:27), it is the most difficult and challenging type of involvement to organise and implement (Peressini 1998b:324). In virtually all cases parents have an advisory position or, at best, very limited direct input into decisions (Parr, McNaughton, Timperley & Robinson 1993:35; McKenna & Willms 1998:27; Lazar & Slostad 1999:208), and cannot be deemed true partners by any stretch of the imagination. School organisation and management has tended

to remain hierarchical and authoritarian, and has stayed firmly in the hands of educators (Comer 1987:14).

This type of parental involvement is the type that the fewest parents participate in and parental involvement in this area is generally not encouraged by the school (Ascher 1988:5). Teachers frequently see themselves as the professionals or experts with parents having little to offer in matters of curriculum, pedagogy and school governance (Parr *et al*/1993:35; Ainley 1995:35; Jonson 1999:122).

Participation of parents in parent-teacher associations, governing bodies and other decision-making school councils does not necessarily mean that parents are actually getting to make decisions (Ashton & Cairney 2001:151). For example, research in Australia has shown that parental involvement in school councils has had little impact on the curriculum and may be only tokenistic (Ainley 1995:38; Ashton & Cairney 2001:145).

Even when parents do get to make important decisions, doubts have been raised about how representative of the parent body those parents on decision-making councils actually are (Dimmock, *et al* 1996:9). Epstein interviewed by Brandt (1989:27) reports that the parents that are on these bodies rarely communicate with the parents they supposedly represent to solicit ideas or reports committee plans or actions. Further parents may become involved simply to promote their own agendas and ideologies without considering others (Black 1998:51). Doubts have also been raised about the benefits of participative decision-making involving parents and others. Participation may not always promote collaborative decision-making or even better quality decisions (McGrath & Kurlikoff 1999:77).

Thus, research has been done to determine the characteristics necessary for successful decision-making groups such as ensuring that these groups are representative and that they advocate the active involvement of as many parents

as possible (Comer & Haynes 1991:272; Stouffer 1992:8). Although parents in some communities wish to make decisions (Hanafin & Lynch 2002:45), it may be necessary to inspire others to want a decision-making role. McClelland and *et al* (in Crozier 1999:320) found few parents, irrespective of class, wanted much active involvement in decision-making and committee work.

2.4.7 Collaboration with the community

The school community is embedded in, and overlaps with, the extended family, the church, local businesses, volunteer organisations, and neighborhood communities, and the school's success depends on their support (McKenna & Willms 1998:35). Communities can have powerful effects on children's development by raising funds, serving as advocates for children's rights, providing learning opportunities outside the school, providing general social support, and providing recreational, social and health services (Epstein 1995:702; McKenna & Willms 1998:35). In return schools can share their facilities with communities, as do most Canadian schools (McKenna & Willms 1998:35). Further, schools can do services for the community such as organising family plans for troubled families, offering a police liaison programme (Stouffer 1992:8), canvassing on behalf of community organisations, and organising neighborhood clean-ups and art or music programmes for the elderly (McKenna & Willms 1998:35). In some countries the concept of a community school is reemerging (Epstein 1995:702). This refers to a place in which programmes and services for learners, parents and others are offered before, during and after the usual school day (Epstein 1995:702). Nevertheless, on the whole connections between schools, families and other community groups have been few and inconsistent (Chapman 1991:356).

Partners for Youth, a Canadian community programme, aims to improve the self-esteem of youths who have poor academic achievement or are at risk of dropping out due to problems with peer or family relationships, drug or alcohol abuse, or problems due to early sexuality. This community programme, funded mainly by private donors and businesses and staffed by volunteers, involves providing challenging adventure based activities to build up self-esteem, and trust. This programme has benefited both the community and its source schools (McKenna & Willms 1998:35).

2.4.8 Summary

While a great deal of research supports the beneficial role of parents' involvement in their children's education, the wide variety of different activities studied, and varied ways in which their effects have been measured, makes generalization difficult. Nevertheless, research indicates that involvement of parents in learning activities in the home, particularly in terms of home discussion and well-designed interactive homework, has the greatest positive impact on academic success. Parenting, especially a positive parenting style, also has a strong positive effect on children's academic outcomes. Further parenting and involvement in learning activities in the home can be improved and have been found to have a greater effect on school achievement than socioeconomic status variables, which cannot be changed.

Although parental involvement in decision-making, collaboration with the community, communication, and parental involvement at the school, generally have little direct effect on learner academic achievement, some of the activities that fall under these four types of parental involvement have been found to improve learners' academic success. Moreover, they may result in many other positive learner outcomes including a more positive parent and learner attitude

to the school, better homework completion, and improved learner behaviour. Further, parental involvement of any type cannot occur without effective communication and that true parental partnership requires that the parents play a significant role in decision-making and advocacy.

Thus, many researchers recognise the benefits of implementing a comprehensive parental involvement programme. However, studies conducted in a variety of schools indicate that adequate parental involvement of all types is rare and requires considerable effort.

2.5 How parental involvement works

2.5.1 Introduction

In order to make decisions on how to go about promoting parental involvement to maximise its benefits for learners, parents and teachers it is necessary to understand how it works (Zellman & Waterman 1998:371). A variety of theories have been proposed and evidence for these theories forwarded (Ma 1999:62-63).

2.5.2 The learners

Some authors theorise and provide evidence for the idea that parental involvement improves children's academic performance by helping them gain cognitive skills (Tijus *et al* 1997:7). The children gain cognitive skills through activities such as their parents helping with homework, and providing more educational resources, resources for skill development, and cognitive stimulation (Tijus *et al* 1997:7).

However, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:249) have provided evidence for the belief that parental involvement affects children's school performance by affecting the children affectively, in terms of their attitudes and motivation, and not directly cognitively. These authors believe that children are more successful in school because they interpret their parents' visits to the school and engagement in school activities as indications that they consider their children to be important. Further, these parents are modeling the idea that the individual has the power to control outcomes and create change. Children may, as a result, see school outcomes as more controllable. In addition, children who have been exposed to, and participated in, educational activities in their homes with their parents may feel better able to master or control similar activities at the school.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:319-322) believe that parents who help their children in activities such as homework enable and enhance their children's education in three ways. Firstly, by modeling that educational activities are worth their time and effort. Secondly, by reinforcing the goals of education when they praise their children for correctly completing homework. Thirdly, by providing direct instruction, which promotes factual learning and cognitive abilities, by drilling their children on homework problems and asking open-ended questions. Balli (1998:145) found further evidence to support these assertions.

The harmonious relationship that results from parents and teachers working effectively together to educate the child is also likely to benefit the child (Ford, Follmer, & Litz 1998:311).

Research by Miedel and Reynolds (1999:382) has also shown that parents involved in parent involvement programmes are more aware of their children's school performance and progress, and had more frequent contact with teachers. They suggested that as a result parents may be more aware of the children's

problems and intercede before special education or grade retention becomes necessary.

2.5.3 The parents

As mentioned many programmes of parental involvement have led to increased parental confidence, enthusiasm and involvement (see 2.4). Many authors believe that this often results from the fact that the programme empowers parents who, as a result of it, no longer see themselves as inadequate mediators of their children's learning but realise they can play an important role therein (Overett & Donald 1998:348). Furthermore, research suggests that as a result of such programmes parents may be empowered with insight as well as specific mediational skills (Overett & Donald 1998:355). Such programmes have improved communication between parents and teachers (Epstein 1987b:5) and resulted in increased parental trust in, and acceptance of, the school (Swap 1993:10). This results in a more positive and satisfying relationship between the school and parent (Swap 1993:10-11).

2.5.4 The teachers

Research indicates that parental involvement programmes also make the teacher's job easier and more successful (Epstein 1991:348). Further, teachers benefit due to the support and appreciation of parents and their enthusiasm for problem solving and teaching generally is rekindled (Epstein & Dauber 1991:297; Swap 1993:10).

2.5.5 Summary

Parental involvement seems to work by a combination of reinforcing children's direct learning and academic skills and by helping to provide them with the confidence and desire to use these skills. Parental awareness of what is occurring at school may also result in earlier intervention and avoidance of problems. Parents and teachers benefit from improved relationships with each other and parents are empowered both in terms of their belief in their own abilities to help and also in terms of being provided with the skills they require, through parent involvement.

2.6 The determinants of parental involvement

Epstein and Becker (in Sitole 1993:88) designed a questionnaire to measure three broad categories of parental involvement: parent attitude to the school; contact initiated by the parent; and contact initiated by the school. This questionnaire is important, as analysis of the items in it reveals that two of its sections are the determinants of how and to what extent parents are involved in their children's education.

The items in "school initiated contact" refer to the efforts the school makes to initiate parental involvement. For example, by inviting parents to the school or by sending home news about things happening at the school.

The items in "parent initiated contact" refer to the extent to which parents take the opportunities the school gives them to be involved. For example, whether they actually do attend events they are invited to at the school. These items also refer to the extent to which the parents involve themselves in activities that they

can choose whether to be involved in or not, regardless of whether the school requests their involvement. For example, helping with homework.

Consequently, the ways in which parents are involved is determined by what efforts the school makes to involve parents and whether parents take the opportunities they have to be involved.

Despite widespread international understanding of the benefits of parental involvement, levels of involvement in many schools are actually very low (Barnard 1990:2; Mkwanazi 1994:24). A number of factors have been found to influence whether parents do take the opportunities they have to become involved and what efforts the school makes to involve parents.

2.7 Factors influencing the degree and type of parental involvement

2.7.1 Introduction

A wide variety of factors have been found to influence how, and in what ways, parents are involved in the education of their children. Some of these factors relate to the nature of the parents or the family background, others to the nature of the child and still others to the teacher or school in question.

Understanding the factors that determine how, and in what ways, parents become involved should assist in the development of effective parent involvement programmes (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris 1997:538).

2.7.2 The family background

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:238) state in respect to parental involvement, "...because of parents values, time commitments, and availability of resources they may choose to, or be forced to, devote their time and energies to domains differentially".

2.7.2.1 *Socioeconomic status and parental education level*

Socioeconomic status and parent education level are closely associated. Education level is often used as an indicator of socioeconomic status (Entwistle & Alexander 1992:80). Parents from poor communities, often those from minority communities in the West, are increasingly the focus of parental involvement programmes (Overett & Donald 1998:347; Sitole 1993:1). Firstly, because learners from these families tend to achieve less well (Watkins 1997:6-7; Shaver & Walls 1998:94) and, secondly, due to the high levels of child neglect found in these communities (Zellman & Waterman 1998:371).

Some studies have shown that parents from poorer communities and those with lower levels of education tend to be generally less involved in their children's education (Baker & Stevenson 1986:156; Grolnick *et al* 1997:544; Ho & Willms 1996:133). However, Scott-Jones (1987:283) argued, that contrary to this stereotype, parents with a low socioeconomic status and levels of education become involved in their children's education in many positive ways.

Baker and Stevenson (1986:40) found mothers of lower socioeconomic status and education to have poorer management skills, less knowledge of their child's schooling, and less contact with the school than mothers with high socioeconomic status and education. However, no difference was found in terms of homework or general academic strategies.

Further, while Ho and Willms (1996:137) found a statistically significant relationship between socioeconomic status and school communication, home discussion and school participation, these effects were small and explained less than 10% of the differences in these types of parent involvement that occurred between families. Moreover, they found family socioeconomic status to have virtually no relationship with the level of home supervision.

These two studies suggest that even when differences in the general level of parental involvement exist, these differences are due to differences in only some types of parental involvement. In fact, other studies have found no relationship between socioeconomic status and general level of parental involvement (Hickman *et al*/1995: 129; Shaver & Walls 1998:94; Fan 2001:56). Nevertheless, a very large body of evidence supports the proposition that parents of lower socioeconomic status are, indeed, less involved in a few types of parental involvement.

Hickman *et al* (1995:129), despite finding no relationship between socioeconomic status and parental involvement generally, found parents of lower socioeconomic status to be less involved in two out of seven possible areas of involvement that they assessed, namely, school based parental involvement and a category that includes parenting. Grolnick *et al* (1997:546) found that families with a low socioeconomic status had lower cognitive and school involvement. However personal involvement, the more affective type of involvement, was not effected by socioeconomic status, and occurred equally at all socioeconomic levels (Grolnick *et al* 1997:546). Shaver & Walls (1998:95) found that socioeconomic status had no significant role in terms of attendance at school-based workshops in the district that they studied.

This lower involvement of parents with a lower socioeconomic status may be due to increased pressures due to financial constraints and other accompanying

negative factors (Davies 1991:381). They may be less equipped to help due to their lower education level (Scott-Jones 1987:283) or they may view the school with suspicion and/or remain distanced as it often promotes a different (middle class) culture from their own (Friedman 1973:123; Laosa 1980:763; Crozier 1999a:316). Crozier (1999a:316) points out that working class parents tend to view schools (middle-class institutions) as separate from their everyday cultural and social world and that the teacher-parent role comprises a division of labour. She also noted that teachers tend to adopt the same strategies for promoting parental involvement irrespective of parental need, class, or individual circumstances and while these methods may be well-suited middle-class parents they do not work well for working class parents. Hoover-Dempsey *et al* (1987:430) suggest that parents with higher socioeconomic status may better realise the importance of their children's education and may feel more confident in their right to be involved in the school.

Regardless of socioeconomic status, schools find it difficult to involve parents (Cullinford and Morrison 1999:261). Nevertheless, parents from all backgrounds can be involved productively when teachers motivate them (Epstein 1986:293; Shaver & Walls 1998:95). Teachers who try to involve parents work out ways to involve parents of all educational levels (Epstein 1987b:4). The teachers and school's attitude and approach to this involvement is crucial (Watson, Brown & Swick 1983:178; Dauber & Epstein 1989:18; Epstein 1995:703).

2.7.2.2 Race and ethnicity

A multitude of studies have shown that parents of different race or ethnicity are concerned about their children's education and are willing to take an active role in it (Morris & Taylor 1998:229). However, they may favour different types of parental involvement. Asian parents have been found to focus on out of school activities such as music lessons or discussion with their children about the school

programme. African American parents, on the other hand, favour school-site activities (Kerbow & Bernhardt in Zellman & Waterman 1998:371).

Conflicting evidence on the level of parental involvement found in different racial-ethnic groups has been presented. Some studies have found minority parents to be less involved even with socioeconomic status controlled (Zellman & Waterman 1998:375). This may occur as a result of a lack of sociocultural congruency between the home and school which disempowers minority parents and precludes their involvement in their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan 1991:21). However, Kerbow and Bernhardt (in Zellman & Waterman 1998:371) showed that when socioeconomic status is equal, minority parents are often involved in schools at a higher level than non-minority parents are. In a cross-cultural study Asian mothers were found to be more active than American mothers in their children's education (Stevenson & Stigler 1992:54-60). This greater involvement has been correlated with far higher mathematics achievement of Asian children (Stevenson & Stigler 1992:93).

Other studies have shown differences in levels of involvement between parents of different racial and ethnic groups in some types of parental involvement. Ho and Willms (1996:137) found that Hispanic parents had slightly higher levels of home supervision and than Whites, but were similar to Whites in respect to school communication, home discussion and school participation. Black parents had the same level of school participation as White parents but higher levels of the other three types of involvement, while, Asian parents had higher levels of supervision at home but lower levels of the other types of involvement.

The effectiveness of different types of parental involvement may also differ according to the race-ethnicity of the parents and children. Desimone (1999:20) found that parental volunteering at the school was a good predictor of achievement for White learners but was not a significant predictor for

disadvantaged minorities. PTA involvement, on the other hand, was a strong predictor of grades for Black children but was insignificant where the grades of White and Hispanic children were concerned although it was a significant predictor of increased reading scores for all three groups (Desimone 1999:20). She also found differences in the effectiveness of home discussion and parenting styles according to the race-ethnicity of the participants (Desimone 1999:23). This suggests a need for researchers to determine what type of involvement works best for their target population and why.

2.7.2.3 Employment status

Working parents are less likely to interact with the school (Epstein 1988:58). Conflicting work schedules have been found to be a major barrier to parental involvement (Gettinger & Guetschow 1998:49). However, contrary to expectations, Herrich and Epstein (1990:187) found that parents who worked full time tended to work on more home activities with their children than parents who worked part-time or did not work outside the home. Thus, working outside the home was not the main determinant of parents' involvement in home learning activities.

In fact where parents are unemployed as a result of circumstances rather than their own choice, the stress of unemployment, and the urgent problems to survival it presents, leaves parents little time or energy for involvement (van Wyk 2001:126).

2.7.2.4 Marital status

Even with socioeconomic status controlled, single parents and step-families have generally been found to have a lower level of involvement at the school than married parents (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76; Epstein 1995:703; Ho & Willms 1996:137; Grolnick *et al* 1997:546). Epstein (1987a:130) found that while single parents were less involved at the school they spent more time helping their

children at home, than married parents. Ho and Willms (1996:137) found that home discussion and school communication did not vary with marital status. Grolnick *et al* (1997:546) note that involvement at the school may be the most difficult type of involvement for single mothers and that therefore schools may find it useful to target other activities that do not require daytime availability.

Stress has been found to particularly undermine the involvement of the parent in single parent families (Forgatch, Patterson, & Skinner in Grolnick *et al* 1997:539).

It is important for schools to remember that single parents are a diverse group in many important respects such as their level of education, size of family, family resources, and confidence in their ability to help their children (Sitole 1993:73). As a result one cannot simply conclude that children from these homes will be disadvantaged and schools should not be biased against either these parents or their children (Sitole 1993:73). Epstein (1995:703) notes that while research indicates that single parent families tend to be less involved at the school on average, that this can be overcome if the school makes the effort to organise opportunities for the parents to volunteer at various times and places to support their children.

2.7.2.5 Parent gender

Mothers, and other female caregivers, are usually more involved in their children's education than fathers, regardless of family structure or marital status (Christenson *et al* 1992a:37; Standing 1999:58).

2.7.2.6 Parents' perceptions of their educational role and that of the school

The parents' perception of their role contributes to the type and amount of involvement shown by them (Russell 1991:286-287). Grolnick *et al* (1997:539) note that parents are more likely to become involved to the extent that they believe strongly that parents have a role in the teaching-learning process.

Parents who believe in the value of their contributions (Grolnick *et al* 1997:545) and especially when they believe these to have a direct effect on the achievement of their children (Christenson *et al* 1992b:179), are also, more likely to be involved in their children's education. This has been defined as parent efficacy (Morris & Taylor 1998:219).

In general parents will choose those types of involvement in which they believe they can be successful. Thus, parents' perceptions of their specific knowledge and skills will influence the type of involvement the parents choose (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995:317).

One high school had a very large increase in parental attendance at school events simply as a result of informing parents in a newsletter that parental attendance was associated with higher learner grades (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76).

However, many parents feel that the school is the domain of the teacher and the place for education (Wehlburg 1996:127). Crozier (1999a:315-319) found that working class parents tend to perceive teachers as the professionals "who know best" and place great trust in them to fulfil their roles. This results in passivity and inhibits them from playing a greater role in their children's education. Further, some parents may regard education as the sole responsibility of the school (Russell 1991:286; Olmsted 1991:229; van Wyk 2001:126). Many parents feel that their role is fundraising rather than active participation in schools and classrooms (Newport 1992:47). Even when they recognise the importance of their role, some parents have themselves experienced such inadequate schooling that they do not believe they can be effective mediators of their children's learning (Mkwanazi 1994:27; Rasekoala 1997:27; Overett & Donald 1998:348). Further many parents are reluctant to help their children because they are not sure how to help (Eldridge 2001:68).

Parents need to be made aware that their voluntary and genuine involvement has a decisive bearing on developing their children's potential and they need to be guided to fulfill this role (Heck & Williams 1984:28).

2.7.2.7 Barriers to parental involvement

A number of other factors can form barriers that discourage parents from becoming more involved in their children's education.

A negative parental attitude to the school may put parents off communicating or cooperating with the school (Robson & Hunt 1999:186). Some parents do not trust the school to have their children's best interests at heart, which may result in hostility to teachers (Lawson 2003:99-100). This may result from the parents own negative school experiences (Swan & Newhouse 1998:19) or the negative experiences of their own child or other peoples children at the school (Lawson 2003:100). This may be especially true, if a child is continually in trouble and the school is continually presenting parents with negative experiences as a result (Friedman 1973:122). Despair and pessimism regarding educational outcomes for their children also results in some parents being less involved in their children's education (Rasekoala 1997:26).

An important barrier to communication between the parents and school is language differences (De La Cruz 1999:297). Parents who cannot understand school communications may feel helpless and useless (Friedman 1973:122). The use of jargon may alienate even same language speakers to the school (Friedman 1973:122; Rasekoala 1997:26).

Lack of time due to work commitments, community commitments or having several children to look after, also has a detrimental impact on the level of parental involvement (Crozier 1999a:320). Time constraints and inflexible work schedules have been found to be the most significant barriers to parental

involvement in several studies (Gettinger & Guetschow 1998:46; Morris & Taylor 1998:226; Villas-Boas 1998:371). However, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:318) argue that these demands and responsibilities primarily effect the parents' decision about how to become involved rather than whether to become involved. It is important that schools bear the parents' commitments in mind and schedule events to suit the time preferences of their parents, which may differ according to the ages of the learners and the culture of the parents (Brown 2000:11). Badly timed events are likely to be poorly attended (Brown 2000:10).

Parents may also avoid questioning teachers about issues that concern them as they may fear that this may have a negative impact on the teacher's attitude to their children (Morris & Taylor 1998:221).

A lack of transport (Olmsted 1991:229) and late notice for meetings (Moles 1982:46) may also discourage parents from attending events at the school.

2.7.3 The learners

Research has shown that learners want the support and involvement of their parents (Crozier 1999b:123). However, various characteristics of the individual child influence the degree and type of parental involvement practiced by his parents.

The needs of the child may influence the form of parental involvement (Zellman & Waterman 1998:375). As mentioned there is evidence that parents tend to help those children who need help with their homework (Watkins 1997:12). Zellman and Waterman (1998:375) found that many parents who were highly involved at the school did not help their children with homework. They also found that high child IQ was a significant predictor of parent non-involvement in homework, probably because the child did not need help.

Research also suggests that how parents perceive their children's characters may effect their level of involvement. Parents who see their adolescents as difficult tend to be less involved in their education (Ho & Willms 1996:138; Grolnick *et al*/ 1997:545) except, unsurprisingly, in respect to school communication (Ho & Willms 1996:138).

Parents have been found to be more involved in terms of home discussion and school communication with girls than with boys (Hickman *et al*/1995:130; Ho & Willms 1996: 137-138). Hickman *et al*/(1995:130) also found the parents of girls to be more involved in advocacy. Muller (1998:348-353) found that parents of high school boys and girls were involved in significantly different ways. Daughters experience more restrictions and nurturing and involvement is more focussed on the home, while, the parents of sons are more likely to intervene and engage in school involvement outside the home. In contrast to this finding, other studies have found no difference between the levels of involvement for parents of boys or girls (Grolnick *et al* 1997:546-7). However gender may moderate other factors that predict involvement (Grolnick *et al*/1997:546-7).

It has also been proposed that rather than the parent initiating parent involvement as many models assume, it may be the child who initiates it. Academic excellence or taking an advanced school programme may encourage parents to get involved (Ma 1999:78). Further, children who are more confident at school may push their parents to become more involved at school and in the home (Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994:249). Ma (1999: 78) states that it is possible that parents initiate some aspects of parental involvement, such as home supervision, while learners initiate others, such as home-school communication.

2.7.4 The teachers and school

The school and teachers' efforts to involve parents, rather than parental education level, income level, work place or marital status, are largely responsible for the level of parental involvement (Epstein 1995:701-702; Christenson *et al*/1992b:179). Dauber and Epstein (in van Wyk 2001:121) state that school programmes and educator practices are the strongest and most consistent predictors of partnerships between the school and the family. Schools and teachers that encourage parental involvement and offer opportunities for it have higher rates of parental involvement (Epstein 1995:706). Parents also feel more positive about their abilities to help when encouraged by the school (Epstein 1995:706-707).

Epstein (1991:348) states, "In the final analysis, it is the hard work of principals, teachers, and other school staff members that will determine whether and how families understand the schools, their children, and their own continuing influence in their children's learning and development".

2.7.4.1 *Teacher efficacy*

Teacher efficacy is defined as the teacher's confidence in his ability to teach and the ability of his learners to learn, as well as his access to a body of professional knowledge when needed (Hoover-Dempsey *et al* 1987:429). Teacher efficacy has been found correlate with higher levels of parental involvement with respect to attendance at conferences, volunteering, home tutoring and teacher perceptions of parent support (Hoover-Dempsey *et al* 1987:429).

2.7.4.2 *Teacher training in parental involvement*

Teachers vary widely in their beliefs on the effectiveness of parental involvement in terms of positive child outcomes (Epstein 1995:702). Some teachers believe that parents are willing and interested to help and that it is time effective to

involve them (Epstein 1995:702). However, a survey conducted in the United States showed that few educators attributed their practices of parental involvement to knowledge gained in their formal training (Epstein *et al* in van Wyk 2001:127).

Unfortunately, teacher training often does not emphasise or even include the parents role in their children's education, the importance thereof, and ways to approach and involve parents (Epstein 1987b:8; van Wyk 2001:127). As a result many teachers do not feel that it is important to involve parents (Mkwanazi 1994:29; van Wyk 2001:121). Furthermore, not all educators even understand what parental involvement is (van Wyk 2001:127).

Even when parental involvement forms a part of teacher training it may not equip teachers properly to involve parents (van Wyk 2001:127). Tichenor (1998:255) found that student teachers believed that teachers do not involve parents in their children's education mainly because they lack the necessary knowledge and preparation.

A lack of understanding of the true nature of parental involvement may result in teachers having a negative attitude towards parental involvement (Lazar & Slostad 1999:207). Teachers may consider the children's education as entirely their professional domain and not welcome or encourage the involvement of the parent (Wehlburg 1996:128). Moreover, some teachers feel that parental involvement will be a source of conflict between parent and child; that parents will not wish to, or be able, to carry out their commitments; and that parental involvement disempowers teachers (Epstein & Becker 1982:105-108). Teachers may even fear parents (Epstein & Becker 1982:109) as they may feel that the parents may blame them for their children's problems (Hoover-Dempsey *et al* 1987:419). The time investment required for productive parental involvement and the lack of external rewards for efforts to involve teachers may also put

teachers off from being more involved (Epstein & Becker 1982:104; Hara & Burke 1998:18).

Moreover, as a result of a lack of training, teachers do not feel especially competent in many aspects of involving parents such as developing better parenting skills (McKenna & Willms 1998:36). Teachers sometimes feel uncomfortable with some parental involvement activities such as volunteering in the classroom (McKenna & Willms 1998:36). This emphasises the need for pre-service and in-service training of teachers in general and specific techniques to invite parents into their children's education (Wehlburg 1996:127-128).

It is especially important that teachers are educated to have a positive attitude to parental involvement and to parents themselves especially since increased parent power has resulted in increased criticism and calling into account of teachers, decreasing teachers' enthusiasm for parental involvement (Culligford & Morrison 1999:254; Crozier in Crozier 1999a:324). Moreover, Barnard (1990:2) states that successful parent involvement requires mutual teacher-parent sensitivity and empathy for the daily frustrations, problems, challenges and expectations that are part of the teaching situation. An atmosphere of mutual trust, acceptance and respect as well as effective communication must characterise the parent-teacher relationship. Teachers must acknowledge and validate parental contributions and reduce their claim to authority (Anderson 1998:336). Crozier (1999a:325) found that the longer a teacher had been at the school they studied, the more indifferent and cynical their attitude to parents and the less effort they made to relate to them. Thus, in-service as well as pre-service training in parental involvement is essential.

As the head-teacher is a major agent for change in the school and communicates his vision of parental involvement to the teachers and parents (Downer 1996:45), it is essential that head-teachers also receive in-service training.

Ideally the head-teacher should coordinate, manage, support, and acknowledge parent involvement by the teacher (Epstein1987a:133).

Teachers who attend courses on parental involvement have been found to have better attitudes to parents and feel more comfortable and competent in terms of planning and implementing parental involvement (Morris & Taylor 1998:219-228; Tichenor 1998:254).

2.7.4.3 *The nature of the school*

Schools differ in the types of parental involvement they emphasise (Epstein 1987a:132). Epstein (1987a:132) found that urban schools in Maryland, in the United States, used more parent involvement techniques and had more favourable attitudes to parental involvement than suburban or rural schools. She found that while these urban schools conducted more workshops, the suburban schools focussed on parent volunteers in the classroom, and rural schools were highest in their use of home visits.

It has been found that schools with a lower socioeconomic status have lower levels of parental involvement in terms of parent attendance at conferences, volunteering, and teacher perceptions of parental support (Hoover-Dempsey *et al* 1987:429; Ho & Willms 1996:138). However schools of different socioeconomic status were not found to differ in terms of home tutoring and home instruction (Hoover-Dempsey *et al* 1987:429).

Epstein (1988:58) recommends, however, that one not generalise about which type of schools have more or less parental involvement, as schools within the same category, whether government or private, pre-school or high school, serve different populations with different histories, and have different skills and philosophies of involving parents. As a result disadvantaged schools with exciting

parent involvement activities and elite private schools with virtually no parent involvement were not uncommon in her study.

2.7.4.4 The theoretical stance of the school, teachers, parents and other educators

a) Introduction

A variety of researchers have proposed theories on the relationship between the parent and the school and on what their respective roles are and should be. Clearly the theoretical stance adopted by the education authorities, schools, head-teachers, and the teachers and parents themselves, either consciously or unconsciously, will have an enormous impact on the how much, and what type, of parental involvement is envisioned by these stakeholders and on resulting educational practice. Lemmer (2000:62) notes that the most notable of these theories are those of Coleman (1987), Epstein (1995), Swap (1992, 1993), Gordon (1977) and Comer(1987). In addition, that of Reeve (1993:6-10) also provides useful insights into the relationship between schools and parents. Van Wyk (1996:41) notes that no single empirically based model exists and that while there is evidence for each of these theoretical frameworks, further data is still required.

b) Theories of parental involvement

(1) Coleman (1987:32-33) asserts the historical change of the parents' workplace from the home to outside the home, particularly, more recently, that of the mother, and the concurrent shift to mass education outside the home has resulted in the family not fulfilling its role in the socialisation of the child properly. Coleman (1987:36) states that families and communities provide the building blocks, the social capital that makes learning possible. The school also acts to socialise the child in different ways but this is built upon the socialisation that takes place in the home, is less important than it, and does not compensate for a lack in it. As a result a new institution with resources that produce

attitudes, efforts and conception of self is required to provide the necessary social capital for the next generation that the home is no longer providing (Coleman 1987:38).

(2) Gordon (1977:74-78) proposes three different ways in which the family and school can be related to each other and effect each other. In the **Family Impact Model** the school reaches out to the home through home visits or other communication techniques and educates parents on effective parenting and effective support of their children's education. This model assumes that there is a body of knowledge that is essential for effective learning and that teachers know and teach it, and parents learn and apply it. A number of programmes have been designed on these lines such as Gordon's Parent Education follow through Programme (van Wyk 1996:47). Difficulties with this model may arise from disagreement between experts on the best ways for parents to support their children; the possibility that alien values are being imposed on parents and; whether or not these efforts address superficial rather than root problems (Frisby 1992:134).

The **School Impact Model** refers to the parents' impact on the school (Gordon 1977:76). In this model the teacher's learn from the parents as well as the parents learning from teachers and as a result the school becomes more in-tune with the culture of the home resulting in a better working relationship between parents and children and, consequently more effective learning. A number of programmes employ this principle and educate parents to make decisions, such as Head Start and Chapter 1 (Frisby 1992:134). Concerns arise over whether school personnel may have difficulty accepting parents in this role and whether parents will use their power constructively (Frisby 1992:134).

In the **Community Impact Model** the resources of the community are focussed on facilitating the school-home partnership (Gordon 1977:77-78). This

comprehensive programme results in a less "piecemeal" and sporadic programme of parental involvement although the resources required to carry out such programmes may seem overwhelming. Push-Excel is an example of this type of programme (Frisby 1992:135).

(3) Swap (1993:28-59) proposes 4 models of parental involvement. The goal of the **Protective Model** is to reduce conflict between parents and the school by protecting the school from the interference of parents (Swap 1993:28-29). This is done by separating the parents and school's functions and by delegating the responsibility for children's education entirely to the school with the mutual consent of both parties. Parents should not make decisions or collaborate about their children's schooling as this is entirely the school's responsibility (Swap 1993:29). Clearly this model has the disadvantage of rejecting the wealth of resources available from the home as well as possibly increasing conflict between the home and school and it ignores the wealth of evidence that supports the idea that parental involvement has many positive outcomes for the child.

In Swap's (1993:29-38) **School-To-Home Transmission Model**, the goal is to enlist parents to support the objectives of the school. Parents play a greater role in their children's education than in the previous model as this model acknowledges the continuous exchange between the home and school and the parents' important role in enhancing their children's achievement. Parents must transfer the ways of being, thinking, knowing, writing and talking that characterise successful people in the dominant culture, the culture of the school. Parent education programmes are often developed to help parents be more effective. In this model the school is seen as more knowledgeable about correct parenting. Although parents may be involved in decision-making, there is a very unequal distribution of power and the school is still very much in charge. It is the school personnel who define goals and programmes. As the goal is for parents to understand and support the school, two-way communication is not sought after.

While programmes based on this model have increased children's school success they tend to under value the culture of the parents and their ability to contribute to their children's education. As a result parents may become disillusioned over time.

The **Curriculum Enrichment Model** (Swap 1993:38-46) stresses mutual respect between parents and educators. The values and cultures of both educators and parents are respected. The assumption is that families have important expertise to contribute, and that implementation of a curriculum that both parents and educators have contributed to, will improve continuity between the home and school and improve learner achievements. This model values the goals and beliefs of the non-mainstream culture as well as learner success in the mainstream culture (Swap 1992:61). This model focuses on curriculum and instruction and is, thus, not comprehensive (Swap 1993:39). In this model teachers must be responsive to a child's culture (van Wyk 1996:54). Though appealing, this model is difficult to put into practice (Swap 1992:63-64).

In Swap's (1993:47-59) **Partnership Model** parents and educators work collaboratively to achieve a single unifying mission (generally success for all children). This model welcomes parents as indispensable assets and resources in the successful education of their children. It is a comprehensive programme focussing on all areas of a child's education and emphasises two-way communication, mutual goals, parental strengths, problem solving with parents, and community involvement. Local autonomy and control and a revised curriculum are central to this approach (Swap 1992:65). The Comer approach and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence are examples of comprehensive partnership models (Swap 1993:47-59).

(4) Comer's school development programme attempts to promote development and learning by drawing all the participants of education together by building

supportive bonds (Comer & Haynes 1991:272-273). Parents and teachers are empowered to work in partnership with the school and the developmental needs of the whole child are addressed in the process resulting in school success for the child. This model requires the formation of a School Planning and Management Team, a Mental Health Team, and a Parent Program. These work cooperatively to support all the participants needs. This approach requires a comprehensive school plan, staff development activities, and a monitoring and assessment programme, that are focused towards the social and academic goals and activities of the school. Finally, this model relies on three guiding principles: consensus decision-making; a no-fault approach to problem solving; and genuine collaboration (Comer 1987:15-16). Nevertheless, the parents' authority is subordinate to that of the principal and staff (Comer & Haynes 1991:271). This programme is currently being implemented widely in the United States (van Wyk 1996:56).

(5) Epstein maintains that educators see the relationship between schools and parents in three different ways. Either they have separate responsibilities, shared responsibilities or sequential responsibilities (Epstein 1995:701-702). In the sequential perspective parents teach their children until school going age after which the child's education is the responsibility of the school. Epstein notes that if schools see learners as students they are likely to see the families as separate to the school. The families will then be expected to do their job and leave the child's education to the school. This is the **Separate Spheres of Influence Model**.

If the educators see their learners as children, they are likely to see the family and community as partners in the children's education and thus, have shared responsibilities and **Overlapping Spheres of Influence** (Epstein 1995:701-702). Epstein states that ideally schools, families and communities should have overlapping spheres of influence creating school-like families, and family-like

schools and communities that together with parents create school-like opportunities. In this situation shared responsibilities and the generalisation of skills required by parents and teachers is emphasised. Epstein's model illustrates that the degree of overlap between these three spheres in any school is variable with time and it can be increased or decreased by the practices of teachers, administrators or children (Christenson *et al*/1992a:36).

(6) Reeve (1993: 6-10) contends that parents may be seen as consumers, clients, producers of education's raw materials, resources for schools, or co-educators. The most important activity for **consumer parents** (Reeve 1993:7) is to select an appropriate school for their children, one that supports the values and beliefs of the home and provides a service that reflects the parents' view of a good education. Schools operating on this assumption would find communication with parents important to ensure that parents understand the benefits of the product they have chosen and do not reconsider the placement of their children in the school. Parents may also be asked to respond to surveys and questionnaires that will enable the school to develop its image according to these results and parents may act as consumer representatives on boards or school councils. This view of parents is primarily found in private schools although increasing choice of government schools in some countries makes it applicable in these schools too. Schools that follow this image of parents seek to maximise support by responding to what they perceive to be the dominant views of the parents which frequently leads to emphasis on factors such as uniform, and discipline rather than on key educational issues.

The image of **parents as clients** (Reeve 1993:7-8) sees them as autonomous professionals. Educational knowledge and expertise are considered to be the province of teachers, head-teachers, and people in the educational bureaucracy. Parents are seen as having information about their children, which may be of use to the teacher. The client's role is to accept the decisions of the professionals

but, as part of good professional practice, the professionals must ensure that the client understands these decisions and must be responsive to client views when this is consistent with professional judgement. Schools that take this approach value good school to home communication as well as surveys to test parents' responses and they emphasise individual parent-teacher interviews to make use of the parents' knowledge of their child.

The view of **parents as the producers of the raw material of education** (Reeve 1993:8) sees parents as responsible for both inherited and environmental practices that influence a child's development prior to the start of formal education. Parents are held responsible for the quality of the learner. Valued activities for parents according to this approach are education in parenting and school readiness skills and involvement in transition activities in the first weeks of school.

The view of **parents as a resource for schools** (Reeve 1993:8-9) sees parents as voluntary workers to the benefit of the school, teachers and learners. Activities for parents include: improving school grounds and buildings; clerical tasks in school offices, libraries and classrooms; fundraising; production of teaching materials; listening to reading; and coaching sports. This view sees parent involvement as synonymous with community work in schools.

Lastly, the view of **parents as co-educators** (Reeve 1993:9-10) recognises the significance of the parents' function as co-educators in the pre-school years and in parallel with school activities especially in the primary years. Parents are seen to have a body of knowledge about their children's experiences, which may be helpful to teachers. People who hold this view often regard children's learning as the ongoing interaction of the experiences arranged by the school and those of the home. Schools and policy makers that hold this image of parents emphasise additional tutoring by parents, supervision of homework, and parents as

facilitators in terms of providing their children with educationally desirable experiences. Parents' representation on school councils is favoured, however, there are few connections between this activity, which tends to involve only a few parents and the other activities which involve many parents. Moreover, planning, evaluation, and decision-making on educational issues are still usually considered the province of the school staff except in the case of a limited number of parents that may be included in school governance structures.

2.7.5 The government

Many governments now include parental involvement as an important part of their educational policy and many have mandated various programmes of parental involvement at either state/provincial or national level (Reeve 1993:2; Wehlburg 1996:126; McKenna & Willms 1998:21). Nevertheless, research has shown that generally levels of parental involvement are very low or involvement is restricted to superficial activities in most schools (Christenson *et al*/1992a:33). In order for the goals of these policies to be met there must also be clarity on the content and implementation of these programmes (Peressini 1998a:558) and they must be adequately funded (Epstein 1991:348; Hara & Burke 1998:18). However, national calls for parent and community involvement are often couched in vague terms that remain on the abstract level (Peressini 1998b:320) and programmes are usually not adequately funded (Chapman 1991:356; Epstein 1991:348; McKenna & Willms 1998:22).

When adequate funds are made available, success may follow. In 1987 the Illinois State Board of Education in the United States established a grant programme which involved the awarding of sizeable, multi-year competitive grants directly to schools themselves (Chapman 1991:355-358). These grants were designed to fund programmes that would bring together schools, families,

businesses and other social service agencies in order to improve learner outcomes (Chapman 1991:355). These programmes were found to be highly successful with more than 80% of the schools accomplishing over 90% of their goals including academic improvements as well as improvements in areas such as discipline and school attendance (Chapman 1991:358).

Furthermore, parental involvement places extra demands on teachers and head-teachers (McKenna & Willms 1998:37). Thus, in order to motivate educators to initiate and carry-out parental involvement, educational policy needs to include ways to give teachers the time they require to receive the training they need in parental involvement and to ensure that teachers are recognised for their successes in this area (McKenna & Willms 1998:37).

2.7.6 Summary

A wide variety of factors relating to the parents, the child, the school and educators, and the governments themselves determine to what degree and in what ways parents become involved in their children's education.

Parents of lower socioeconomic status and single parents tend to be less involved in at least some types of parental involvement. Parents of different race-ethnicity are involved in different ways and it seems likely that their choice of preferred activities will vary according to the nature of their specific community. Working parents tend to be more involved in the home but less involved at the school, however, parents who are unemployed, but not by choice, may be less involved generally. High parental efficacy is also required for effective parental involvement. A negative parental attitude to the school, language differences, and lack of time or transport may form barriers to parental involvement.

Parents are more likely to help with homework if their child needs help. Confident children and those that achieve academically or take advanced courses may encourage their parents to be involved in their education. Moreover, parents are more likely to be involved if they do not perceive their children as difficult. Parents may be involved in different ways or to different degrees with children of different genders although evidence for no difference in these respects has also been forwarded.

The most important determinant, of parental involvement, however is the attitudes and practices of the teachers and school. High teacher efficacy, and thorough teacher training in parental involvement, are required for effective parental involvement. Unfortunately, the majority of teachers are not given sufficient training in parental involvement and as a result they lack the knowledge, skills, confidence and attitudes required to implement parental involvement effectively. Both intensive pre-service and in-service training in parental involvement are required for all educators. If this training is not given educators and schools may adopt, either consciously or unconsciously, a theoretical stance that is detrimental to the practice of parental involvement.

Schools and educators that adopt a stance similar to either Gordon's Family Impact model, Swap's Protective model or School-to-Home Transmission Model, Epstein's Separate Spheres of Influence, or any of Reeve's first four models would either prevent parental involvement entirely or at best limit it to only one or a few types of involvement. Comprehensive parental involvement, even though not guaranteeing full partnership for parents, can only hope to be achieved if the school and educators adopt a theory similar to either Gordon's School Impact Model, Swap's Partnership Model, Comer's Approach, Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence, or Reeve's view of parents as co-educators.

Finally, whether the government has a clearly defined and spelt out policy on parental involvement, makes adequate funds available for its implementation, and provides incentives for educators to make the necessary extra effort to involve parents, will have a large impact on how widely and effectively parent involvement programmes are implemented by schools and teachers.

2.8 The focus of parental involvement research

The majority of parental involvement research has focussed on pre-school or early primary, education (Wehlburg 1996:126). This is because children are believed to be particularly susceptible and amenable to education and maximally sensitive to home influences at a young age, and thus, it is believed that programmes will have the greatest effect if aimed at this level (Entwisle & Alexander 1992:73). Nevertheless, quite a bit of research has been done on senior primary education and secondary education and it suggests that the benefits of parental involvement continue up to and throughout high school (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:75; Flaxman & Inger 1991:5; Ho & Willms 1996:137; Ma 1999: 61).

Furthermore, such programmes are particularly needed in higher primary grades and high school as this is when parents tend to stop being spontaneously involved in their children's education and there is a decline in teacher practices to involve parents (Epstein 1986:279; Herrich & Epstein 1990:167; Stouffer 1992: 5; Izzo *et al*/1999:817).

Lower spontaneous parental involvement at these levels may be because parents may have more difficulty understanding and finding ways to help with the more difficult work or they may not realise that they are still needed (Muller 1998:352; Lazar & Slostad 1999:208). Parents have been found to believe that the teachers

of their older children did not want parents to help at home, and parents reported that they received fewer ideas, in this respect, from teachers in the upper elementary grades (Epstein 1987a:129). Parents may also feel more removed, and geographically be more removed, from higher-level schools (Muller 1998:352). Further, older children offer more resistance to parental involvement (Stouffer 1992:5; Ainley 1995:40).

Moreover, teachers tend to have less personal relationships with their learners in the upper primary grades and high school due to the shift at these levels of teachers into subject specialists and this may discourage them from requesting parental support (Epstein 1986:279). Schools may also become progressively less open to parental involvement as the children move to higher grades (Muller 1998:352).

Nevertheless, nearly all parents, at all levels, remain interested in their children's schooling and success, and would like directions and information from schools on how to help their children (Epstein 1987a:129; Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76). This, combined with the abundant evidence of the continued benefits of parental involvement in the higher primary grades and throughout high school indicates the importance of continued research into parental involvement, and the necessity of implementing parent involvement programmes, at these levels.

2.9 Criticisms of parental involvement programmes

2.9.1 Doubts as to whether parental involvement benefits children

A study by White, Taylor and Moss (1992:91) concluded that involvement of parents in early intervention programmes does not produce benefits for children.

However, analysis of White *et al* (1992:91-125) review by Miedel and Reynolds (1999:381), throws serious doubts on this conclusion.

In their review White *et al* (1992:91-125) focussed mainly on studies in which the parent teaches the child developmental skills. This creates measurement concern as it is unclear exactly what parental activities were being investigated and whether outcomes that were consistent with the goals of these activities were measured (Miedel & Reynolds 1999: 381). Further White *et al* used an extremely narrow measure for the success of the programmes, positive changes in IQ. Other literature suggests that subject grades, grade retention rates, special education placement, school attendance, learner citizenship and social values are more appropriate measures to determine the impact of parental involvement programmes (Ascher 1988:120; Miedel & Reynolds 1999: 381).

These criticisms of White *et al* combined with the considerable, growing body of research that insists on the benefits of parental involvement to the child, leave little doubt that parental involvement has many positive child outcomes including academic achievement. The vast majority of researchers support this contention (Epstein 1995:706; Hickman *et al*/1995:126).

2.9.2 The negative impacts of parental involvement

Although almost all the research on parental involvement indicates that it is beneficial to the child, some types of parental involvement such as helping with homework and pressurising the child have been found to have negative impacts on the child's academic achievement (Grolnick, Ryan & Deci 1991:515; Georgiou 1999: 412). The many studies that show that helping with homework is beneficial to the child, however, suggest that helping with homework is not actually detrimental to the learner as such, but rather that it is harmful only

when this help is offered in ways that are inappropriate or damage the child self-esteem (see 2.4.4).

Furthermore, Overett and Donald (1998:353) found evidence of negative interactions between parents and their children as the result of parental involvement. These include things like negative comments, cross looks, being shouted at, and being hit. They noted that this was particularly true when family members other than the parents were involved. Thus, it is essential that parents, and other family members, are not simply told to be more involved. Rather they must be taught what to do, how to do it, and when to do it, and warned of danger signs that may suggest they are doing more harm than good. This also indicates the importance of parents being willing partners in the involvement programme and of having realistic goals, acceptable and flexible time constraints, and repeatedly stressing a focus on informal, enjoyable and positive interaction (Overett & Donald 1998:353).

Classroom volunteers can also have a negative effect on children's academic achievement if they do not have the skills and training to teach the subject matter (McKenna & Willms 1998:36).

Allowing parents to make decisions in such away that the parents decisions hold precedence over those of the school staff, such that the staff are no longer able to exercise their professional judgement, has also been found to result in some questionable and even harmful education practices (McGrath & Kuriloff 1999:78). Some very negative and destructive relationships between parents and school staff have also resulted (Black 1998:53). This suggests a need for informed parents and collaboration between parents and teachers in terms of decision-making as well as a need for parents and teachers to trust each other.

Edwards and Warin (1999:336) feel that parents are often required by schools, with minimal training, to teach their children numeracy or literacy skills in formal ways which require a level of teaching professionalism that parents lack. This results in considerable discrepancies between approaches recommended to parents and actual practice (Edwards & Warin 1999:336).

2.9.3 Summary

There is little doubt that parental involvement usually results in positive child outcomes. However, the evidence presented by these studies indicates that if carried-out poorly parental involvement can be harmful to the child. Clearly an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and trust between parents and educators must prevail for successful parental involvement. Parents must be trusted to make decisions and must know when to trust the teachers' professionalism. While Edwards and Warin (1999:334) seem to underestimate parents' abilities, there is little doubt that parents should not be asked to assume a formal teacher's role in the home but should rather be assigned informal, enjoyable, and manageable activities. It is also essential that parents are given adequate training such that they are able to fulfill their role competently and recognise when they are doing more harm than good.

2.10 Criticisms of research on parental involvement

2.10.1 A lack of generalisability and stringency

Unfortunately, while a great deal of research has been done on parental involvement, and even though many educators embrace the idea enthusiastically, there is still a lack of understanding on the part of schools,

teachers and governments on precisely how to involve parents effectively (Epstein 1995:703; Zellman & Waterman 1998:371). This is mostly due to lack of generalisability and stringency in the methods used for research into parental involvement, which limits the usefulness of this research and makes it hard for schools to decide on, and implement, a specific programme.

Programme outcomes have frequently not been stringently evaluated (Zellman & Waterman 1998: 371). For example, many of the studies that report positive academic outcomes do not control for prior academic performance and thus may overestimate the effects of parental involvement (Ma 1999:75).

Furthermore, research has also often not shown precisely what accounts for the impact of parental involvement on child outcomes (Zellman & Waterman 1998:371). Even those studies that actually correlate specific parent behaviours with child outcomes provide limited insight into why parent involvement might matter (Zellman & Waterman 1998:371).

Moreover, the choice of a particular programme is made difficult by the fact that various authors mean different things by parental involvement, which is a rather undifferentiated concept including a wide-variety of parental behaviours (see 2.2). Thus, it is difficult to ascertain what types or amounts of parental involvement make a difference (Gettinger & Guetschow 1998:39). Ma (1999:78) gives the example of volunteering used in her study, which could refer to any of a few volunteering behaviours, which may have different effects on learner outcomes. Thus, it is often unclear precisely which components of parental involvement affect schooling outcomes of children (Ma 1999:61).

Furthermore different researchers have seldom used the same instruments to evaluate their programmes (Ascher 1988:112). Sometimes principals are interviewed, other times parents are observed or teachers questioned (Ascher

1988:112). Moreover, the populations studied have been demarcated in very different ways, some by school, others by grade, still others by district (Ascher 1988:113). This makes it very difficult to compare their results.

It is also not clear whether deliberate structured programmes of parental involvement will achieve the same results as naturally occurring involvement (Zellman & Waterman 1998:371).

However, research methods are becoming more stringent. There are, for example, a growing number of studies that have demonstrated the benefits of parental involvement while controlling for children's previous school performance (e.g. Overett & Donald 1998: 349; Izzo *et al* 1999:819, Ma 1999:75). This, combined with clearer definitions of parental involvement, as well as clear descriptions of precisely what the author means by various types of parental involvement (e.g. Jantjes 1995:304; Georgiou 1999:416) make it possible to recognise and predict, to some extent, the effects of certain types of parental involvement on the child (Epstein 1995:706). However, these need to be confirmed for different populations (Epstein 1995:706).

2.10.2 Causation vs. correlation

While most authors believe that parental involvement is responsible for a variety of benefits to the child, there is still some debate over whether the relationship between parental involvement and positive child outcomes, particularly achievement, is causational or only correlational (Georgiou 1999:411). This is because most studies have been correlational and not experimental (Gettinger & Guetschow 1998:38).

Very few experimental or quasi-experimental studies, such as those of Overett & Donald (1998:349) and Reynolds (1992:146), have been done. This makes it difficult to determine the precise relationship between parental involvement and positive child outcomes. Ma (1999:77-78) points out, for example, that it was possible that the learners in her study participated in advanced mathematics classes because the volunteer work done by their parents at the school demonstrated that school is important and motivated them. She notes, however, that it was also possible that it was because the students enrolled in advanced mathematics courses that their parents became more involved.

Nevertheless, the correlational evidence of a great many studies and the quasi-experimental evidence of fewer studies suggests that parental involvement has a direct effect on child achievement and causes various positive child outcomes. This view is widely accepted by researchers in the field (Epstein 1995:706).

2.10.3 Summary

While research into parental involvement has suffered from a variety of methodological problems that have made generalisation difficult, this research is increasingly becoming more stringent and comparable. Furthermore, the sheer mass of research makes some generalisations possible. While most evidence is based on correlational studies, the results of quasi-experimental studies are supportive and researchers in the field accept that parental involvement results in a variety of positive child outcomes.

2.11 Chapter summary and implications for the design of a parental involvement programme in Swaziland

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that parental involvement results in many important positive learner outcomes (see 2.4). Thus, it would be beneficial to develop a parental involvement programme in Swaziland. Epstein's very widely accepted categorisation of parental involvement into six types seems to be a particularly useful way of examining parental involvement and the benefits thereof, in order to ascertain which types of parental involvement activities the Swazi programme should emphasise (see 2.3).

Research indicates that parenting style and especially parental involvement in learning activities in the home have a greater impact on children's academic achievement than communication, involvement at the school, decision-making, and community collaboration (see 2.4.8). Consequently, since improved academic achievement is likely to be an aim of a Swazi parental involvement programme, this programme should emphasise parenting and parent involvement in learning activities in the home. In addition, the learning success of children has been found to correlate more with these factors than with family background variables (see 2.4.8). This is particularly encouraging since parenting and parental involvement in learning activities in the home are far easier for educators to change than family background factors (see 2.4.8). As the other four types of parental involvement are also beneficial to learners a Swazi programme should include all six types of involvement (see 2.4.8).

The main two determinants of how parents are involved in their children's education are the efforts the school makes to involve parents and whether parents take the opportunities they have to be involved (see 2.6). A number of family background factors such as the parents' socioeconomic status, marital status, race-ethnicity, employment status, gender, and perception of their roles,

have been found to effect whether, and to what degree, parents take the opportunities they have to be involved (see 2.7.2). Further, a negative parental attitude, language differences between the home and school, and a lack of time and transport form barriers to parental involvement (see 2.7.2.7). In designing a parental involvement programme for Swaziland it is necessary to establish what effect, if any, these factors have on the level of parental involvement, in order to identify less involved parents and ensure that all parents become involved in their children's education. As a result a number of hypotheses (see 4.2.2) that relate parent and family background characteristics with the extent to which they initiate parental involvement will be tested. The parents' beliefs, attitudes and perspectives on parental involvement, the ways they are currently involved in their children's education, and barriers to parental involvement must also be examined.

Individual characteristics of the child can also effect the level and/or type of parental involvement (see 2.7.3). However, the most decisive factor in determining the type and level of parental involvement is the effort the school and teachers make to involve the parents (see 2.7.4). This in turn is dependent upon the teacher's efficacy, training in parental involvement and theoretical stance. Thus, this study will determine precisely what level and type of involvement Swazi teachers and schools currently initiate. The teachers' attitudes, feelings, beliefs and perspectives on parental involvement will also be investigated so that a programme can be designed to address any of these aspects that may be limiting parental involvement in Swaziland.

Consequently a combined approach of quantitative and qualitative research will be used to gain a more complete picture of parental involvement as it currently exists in Swaziland with the aim of designing an effective programme to the benefit of Swazi learners, teachers and parents. The methods and methodology of this study will be discussed in Chapter 4.

This study focuses on urban Swazi senior primary schools since learners at this level still benefit greatly from parental involvement, but this is the level at which most parents' spontaneous involvement tends to decline (see 2.8). Swaziland has its own unique system of education (see 3.2). In addition, conditions in Swaziland, while similar to those in South Africa in some respects, are quite different from those in most other countries where the majority of research has been done (see 3.3). Further, the policies and actions of governments have a large impact on whether parental involvement is implemented at schools (see 2.7.5). Consequently, Chapter 3 addresses the education system of Swaziland, and the parental involvement policies and research done in Swaziland and South Africa.

Chapter 3

The education system in Swaziland and parental involvement in Swaziland and South Africa

"Parent involvement in schools reflects a country's national values and political ideology, its traditional practices and its approach to educational theory" (McKenna & Willms 1998:20).

3.1 Introduction

“Parent involvement in schools reflects a country’s national values and political ideology, its traditional practices and its approach to educational theory” (McKenna & Willms 1998:20).

Swaziland has its own unique culture and system of education. In order to understand parental involvement as it currently exists in Swaziland, and to create a practical and effective parental involvement programme for the future, it is necessary to have some understanding of the Swazi culture and Swaziland’s education system.

Moreover, a country’s official policy on parental involvement has a large effect on the practice of parental involvement at its schools (Epstein 1987b:5). Thus, the role of parents, according to Swazi education policy, is examined in this chapter.

Although South Africa and Swaziland are quite different in some important respects, South Africa is Swaziland’s closest neighbour and has a large influence over it. Furthermore, while not culturally identical, the populations of Swaziland and South Africa have considerably more in common than either population has with populations of other non-southern African countries. Thus, the research on parental involvement carried out in South Africa may be more relevant to Swaziland than research done in other countries. Hence, research on parental involvement in South Africa and South African education policy are discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Swaziland and the Swazi education system

Swaziland is a very small land-locked African country with an area of 17 364 square kilometers and a population of just under 1 million people (SASB 1999:1-2). Swaziland is surrounded almost entirely by South Africa, its only other neighbour is Mozambique on its eastern border (Magagula, Dlamini, Mkatshwa, Dlamini, & Shongwe 2001:8).

Swaziland is an unusual African country in that its population is largely culturally and linguistically homogenous. This is not true for the majority of other African countries where colonisation resulted in heterogeneous populations usually including several ethnic groups with different languages and cultures, and sometimes, different religions as well. The Swazi population is almost entirely composed of Black, Christian, siSwati speaking people of Swazi culture (SASB 1996:8). In fact, European and other non-Swazi residents make up less than 1% of the population (SASB 1999:8-16). As a result of this cultural homogeneity, education in Swaziland does not face some of the problems found in schools composed of learners of a variety of different cultures and values (Huang & Gibbs 1992:81).

Swaziland is also one of the few remaining countries to be ruled by a King rather than an elected government. The King is responsible for appointing the Prime Minister who in-turn appoints the various departmental ministers including the Minister of Education. As a result the Minister of Education is accountable to the King.

Further, the majority of Swaziland's land falls under Swazi Nation Land (SABS 1999:2), which is governed by the chief of that particular area. Land is available to all Swazis who fall under a chief. The vast majority of Swazis, even if they own a house in an urban area, also have a piece of land on which they can build

a home and grow crops. As a result they have various duties and obligations to the chief of that land.

Like most other African countries, however, Swaziland is a poor country. Although Swaziland prioritises education and spends approximately a third of the national recurrent budget on education, it has inadequate resources for education (IE 1994:ii). Facilities and materials are in short supply and there is an urgent need for well-qualified teachers (IE 1994:13-15). Almost 80% of Swazi teachers have some teacher training (SGES 2001:12). However, only 10 % of the teachers have completed their O'Levels, the majority of the remainder have pre-O'Level education and have attended teacher-training courses (IE 1994:13).

In Swaziland there are three different types of schools: private schools; aided schools; and government schools (SGES 2001:7). Private schools rely entirely on school fees and church or community donations for their funding. The Ministry of Education staffs aided schools (IE 1994:9). In addition, aided schools receive additional funding usually from religious groups. Government schools are funded entirely by the government. Almost 80% of Swazi schools are aided schools, while only just over 2% are private (SGES 2001:7). In practice the differences between urban aided schools and government schools are minimal. Both types of school are staffed by the Ministry of Education, have very large class sizes, low school fees, and are poorly equipped when compared with private schools (IE 1994:12-15). The curriculum taught at government and aided schools is chosen by the Ministry of Education which also prescribes regulations concerning discipline and corporal punishment (IE 1994:12). This means that some decisions such as staffing, curriculum and discipline, in aided and government schools are made almost entirely by the government.

Parents do, however, decide which school their child will attend. Many of the learners served by a school are not from neighbouring communities (IE

1994:28). Parents select schools by performance as much as by location (IE 1994:28). School fees also influence the parent's choice.

Parents must pay for their children's education at all three types of school. However, in government and aided schools these fees are only expected to cover learning materials, while the few private schools depend almost entirely on school fees for all of their expenses (IE 1994:26). As a result, government and aided schools have far lower fees than private schools. Nevertheless, increasingly learners at government and aided schools are dropping out of the education system altogether, because their parents cannot afford school fees (IE 1994:31).

The language of instruction in the majority of primary schools in the country is siSwati. English is introduced later in the primary cycle (IE 1994:12). However, many of the urban primary schools teach in English from Grade 1 and attract parents on this basis, since fluency in English is prized in Swaziland.

On average nearly 9% of all learners dropout of school at the end of each primary grade, while 16% repeat each grade (SGES 2001:30). Only 50% of the children who start Grade 1 complete primary school and many take as long as 12 years to do so (DP 1998:172). The situation is even worse in high school (SGES 2001:30). This indicates a need for practices that will increase the academic success of learners and encourage them to stay at school. Parental involvement has been found to lower dropout rates, improve academic achievement, and result in a wealth of other advantages (see 2.4). Consequently, Swaziland would clearly benefit from a parental involvement program especially since parental involvement is a very cost-effective way to address problems in education (van der Werf *et al*/2001:461).

3.3 The parental involvement policies of Swaziland and South Africa and their implementation.

3.3.1 Introduction

Epstein (1987b:5-6) notes that state policies, guidelines and bylaws for educational programmes strongly influence or determine the degree and type of parental involvement practiced by schools. Thus, it is necessary to investigate Swazi educational policy on parental involvement and its implementation.

Swaziland's closest neighbour is South Africa. In fact, Swaziland is almost entirely surrounded by South Africa and bases its currency on the South African Rand. As a result Swaziland is aware of, and often influenced by, the progressive policies and practices of its powerful neighbour. With this in mind the educational policy of the South African government and its implementation are discussed.

3.3.2 The parental involvement policy of Swaziland and its limitations

3.3.2.1 *Swazi parental involvement policy*

Swazi education policy does not address parental involvement directly, in fact, no mention of any type of parental involvement is made in the *Development Plan 1998-2001* which focuses instead on better quality teaching and greater administrative efficiency (DP 1998:171-187).

Nevertheless, the *National Policy Statement on Education* (NPSE 1998:1-14) outlines several roles for parents in their children's education. Firstly, in terms of curriculum development this policy states, "Consultation with parents, students and other major stakeholders shall be a priority when making regular improvements on the curriculum" (NPSE 1998:4). Further, this document assigns

a role for parents in the determination of school fees. School fees must be determined by the head-teacher and committee of each school and approved by the parents in consultation with the Regional Education Officer (NPSE 1998:11). This policy document also states that the education system must be reorganised so that it includes "...structures of institutional governance such as School Committees, Parent-Teachers' Associations (PTA) and School Boards of Directors which will reflect the interests of all stakeholders and the broader community served by the school" (NPSE 1998:12). Head-teachers, School Committees, PTAs and School Board Members must also be trained to manage relevant aspects of school life effectively (NPSE 1998:12). The policy also includes communication of information to parents, as it charges the Management Information System (which is responsible for collecting the information needed by the Ministry of Education to make policy decisions), to find ways to disseminate information to all stakeholders (NPSE 1998:13). Although this policy also assigns the community a role in establishing infra-structure and ensuring sound educational programmes this is only at pre-school level (NPSE 1998:4).

The Ministry of Education (IE 1994:15-26) points out two further roles for parents in their children's education. Firstly, the parents' role in the physical development of schools, particularly the construction of primary schools. Secondly, the parents' contribution in terms of school fees. Parents also decide which school their child will attend (see 3.2).

3.3.2.2 Limitations of Swazi parental involvement policy

Clearly, the Swazi government does not prioritise parental involvement at this time, and thus, does not seem to be fully aware of the benefits of involving parents fully in their children's education. Rather, policy emphasises improved academic outcomes for learners through the use of continuous assessment and teacher training, and economic and administrative restructuring (IE 1994:40-41).

Nevertheless, the policy does include a role for parents in their children's education. Parents must be consulted when curriculum changes are made and school fees are determined, information must be communicated to them, they may play a role in establishing and financing schools, and school governance committees must be representative of them and the larger community.

Unfortunately, these roles for parents are somewhat limited. Policy does not promote involvement in all six of Epstein's (1995:704) types of parental involvement. Learners benefit most from a comprehensive programme (see 2.4.1) and Swazi policy neglects those types of parental involvement found to benefit learners the most, parenting and parental involvement in learning activities in the home (see 2.4.8). As a result the benefits of this limited policy on parental involvement are also likely to be limited.

3.3.3 The parental involvement policy of South Africa and its limitations

In South Africa parental involvement has been recognised as being critical to the new (post-apartheid) education dispensation by both the government and opposition (Mkwanazi 1994:24). This recognition has resulted in the formulation of education policy that includes a role for parents.

3.3.3.1 South African parental involvement policy

The *South African Schools Act, 1996* (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996:3) acknowledges the rights of parents, defined broadly to include parents, guardians, custodians and people who take on the role of guardians, to be involved in school governance. As discussed (see 2.4.6), parental involvement in government and advocacy is essential for parents to be true partners in education (McKenna & Willms 1998:25). The functions of school governing bodies in South Africa include: developing the mission statement of the school;

determining the language and admittance policies of the school (within the limits set by the *South African Schools Act*); adopting a code of conduct for the learners; making recommendations on the appointment of teaching and administrative staff; maintaining and improving school property; determining extra-mural curriculum and subject choice; and purchasing textbooks (RSA 1996:10-11). Parents must constitute the majority of these governing bodies (RSA 1996:13). The Act was amended in 2000 (RSA 2000a:2) to ensure that the composition of the governing body is representative of the racial and linguistic composition of the school. If necessary, members who are representative of the racial and linguistic composition of the school can be co-opted onto the school governing body and given full voting powers.

In addition to parents' roles in school governance, the South African government recognises the importance of the community as a partner in education. This is illustrated by priority 3, of a nine-point mobilisation programme for education and training set out by the Minister of Education (DE 1999 in van Wyk 2001:118). Priority 3 states that "Schools must become centers of community life". The Minister states that there is a role in community schools for religious bodies, cultural groups, sports clubs, businesses and civic associations both to serve their own requirements and to contribute to the school's learning programme within and out of school hours (DE 1999 in van Wyk 2001:118). Further, the *South African Schools Act, 1996* (RSA 1996:10-11) recommends that school facilities be made available for community educational and fundraising events. Moreover, the Department of Education notes seven roles for educators, one is a community, citizenship and pastoral role (RSA 2000b:7). This role includes the development of supportive relations with parents and other key persons and organisations "...based on a critical understanding of community and environmental issues" (RSA 2000b:8).

3.3.3.2 Limitations of South African policy on parental involvement

Although parental involvement in government and advocacy is soundly supported by South African policy Epstein (1987b:7) states, "It is not enough to mandate only parent advisory councils, or parent-teacher organisations, or only parent volunteers at the school building. These activities involve only a small proportion of the parents and have little impact on the abilities of all parents to help or monitor their children throughout the school years". In fact, the only mention made of the parental body as a whole in the *South African Schools Act, 1996* (RSA 1996: 10) is that the governing body should encourage parents to render voluntary services to the school. Only a few vague references to the whole parent body, as part of the community, are made in the *Norms and Standards for Educators* (RSA 2000b:7-8). Thus, South African educational policy includes only a small role for the parent body as a whole. This is unfortunate since parental involvement should include all parents and most parents prefer to be involved in their own children's learning rather than in school governing bodies (Epstein 1995:708).

Moreover, while South African policy certainly promotes parental involvement in the areas of government and advocacy, and collaboration and exchange with community organisations, like Swazi policy it does not promote involvement in all six of Epstein's (1995:704) types of parental involvement. Lemmer (2000:61) notes that giving parents an increased role in only the governance of schools often leads to disappointing results as a wide body of evidence suggests that school governance is only weakly related to teaching and learning. Consequently, changes in governance have little effect on learner achievement (Lemmer 2000:61).

3.3.4 Implementation of Swazi and South African policies on parental involvement

In order for parental involvement policy to be successfully implemented, policy must contain or be followed by clear and explicit guidelines for the implementation of the policy (Peressini 1998a:558).

Such guidelines have not been made explicit for the roles described for parents by Swazi policy and for community involvement in South Africa. Swazi policy does not explain how parents will be consulted on curriculum changes or how much influence they will have over these changes or the determination of school fees. It is not elucidated how representativeness in school governing structures will be established, or precisely what the functions of these bodies are. Finally, it is not explained how the Management Information System will inform parents. As a result of this lack of clarity and detail it is likely that government and schools will find these policies difficult to implement.

Community involvement is most clearly discussed in a 10-page list of educator competencies in The National Education Policy Act, 1996 (RSA 2000b: 8-17). However, the Act only makes a few general statements that relate to teachers' competencies in this regard. These include: respecting the roles of parents and the community and assisting in building structures to facilitate this; understanding key community problems; understanding the possibilities for life- and work-skill education and training in local communities, organisations and business; and knowing about the available support services and how they may be utilised. These vague descriptions make it difficult for teachers to understand what to do, or how to go about doing it, where community involvement is concerned.

South African education policy does contain explicit statements concerning the election, composition and responsibilities of the governing body (RSA 1996:9-16). As a result schools should have little difficulty in understanding the nature of these bodies and should be able to implement them. Nevertheless, recent research indicates that these guidelines are not being communicated effectively to educators and other participants and, consequently, they are not being implemented (Legotlo *et al* 2002:117). School principals feel that parents are not being consulted and that educational decisions are still being made at government level (van der Westhuizen & Mosoge 2001:192). Educators are unclear of the distribution of responsibilities for decision-making (Legotlo *et al* 2002:117).

Van Wyk (2001:116) notes that despite the fact that most policy makers and educators endorse the need for parental involvement to improve education, little is being done to prepare educators to work with parents or members of the community in South African schools. Epstein (1987b:8) notes that the state requirements for teaching credentials should include the completion of at least one comprehensive course in family and school connections and the use of parent involvement in teaching. Such a course has recently been introduced at the University of South Africa and confers on teachers a Certificate of Parent Involvement (Lemmer 2000:60). However, it is not mandatory for South African teachers to acquire this certificate. A course on parental involvement is not a professional requirement for Swazi teachers either and this topic is not covered directly in Swazi teacher training programmes (Mazibuko personal communication).

Further, in order for parental involvement policy to be implemented, many educators stress the need for adequate government funding (Epstein 1991:349). Otherwise such programmes are likely to be limited to only those schools whose administrators are very well motivated in this regard. Epstein (1991:348) feels

that the participation of paid parent involvement coordinators may be crucial for the widespread implementation of such programmes. Coordinators guide school staff, provide in-service training for educators, offer services to parents, and perform other tasks that promote successful parental involvement (Epstein 1991:348). In both South Africa and Swaziland no such coordinators exist and funds have not been set aside specifically for parental involvement (DP 1998:185-187). This, despite the fact that the Minister of Education for South Africa acknowledged that we must "...put great effort into ensuring that the governing bodies, especially in poor communities, are given the support they need to become strong and viable" (DE 1999:9).

3.3.5 Summary

Cullinford and Morrison (1999:253) state, "There can be hardly any school policies or mission statements which do not involve the importance of parents and invite as much involvement in school life as possible". Unfortunately, this seems to be the case in virtually all Swazi schools (personal observation) and many South African schools (van Wyk 2001:120).

This is hardly surprising in Swaziland where education policy does not specifically address the issue of parental involvement although parents are given limited roles in their children's education. The situation in South Africa, where a clear and considerable role for parents in government and advocacy has been documented, is somewhat better.

However, both Swazi and South African education policies exclude some of the most beneficial roles for parents and may be difficult to implement due to lack of teacher training, communication, clarity in some areas, and funding.

Swaziland would benefit from adopting an explicit parental involvement policy similar to South Africa's where government and advocacy is concerned. This would necessitate transferring many of the decision-making roles of the Ministry of education to the parents. However, Swazi policy also needs to include a comprehensive and intensive role for parents in Epstein's other five areas of parental involvement. Adequate funding, good communication of the policy, teacher education, and detailed and clear guidelines for policy implementation are also required.

3.4 Parental involvement research in Swaziland and South Africa

3.4.1 Introduction

South Africa differs from Swaziland in several important respects. South African society is heterogeneous and pluralistic and carries the legacy of its apartheid past, which disenfranchised and marginalised the majority of the population (Jantjes 1995:290-300). However, while Swazis do not need to come to terms with the inequalities and bitterness that resulted from apartheid, they do have to contend with similar levels of illiteracy and economic deprivation. Furthermore, the populations of both of these southern African countries have far more in common culturally than either of these populations do with those of Western countries. Consequently, the results of South African research are likely to be more relevant to Swaziland and the development of a parental involvement programme in Swaziland, than are the results of research done in other countries. No research has been done on parental involvement in Swaziland prior to this study.

The majority of South African studies have focussed on previously disadvantaged school communities (e.g. Sitole 1993:85; Mkwanazi 1994:24; van Wyk 1996:6).

3.4.2 Benefits of parental involvement in South Africa

Research suggests that, similar to the findings of foreign studies (see 2.4), parental involvement in South African benefits learners in a variety of ways.

Sitole (1993:142) found that parents of Soweto primary school learners who passed were significantly more involved than those of learners who failed in terms of parental attitude, parent initiated contact and school initiated contact.

The introduction of a paired reading programme in Mitchell's Plain in the Western Cape significantly improved the learners' attitude to reading and their accuracy and comprehension (Overett & Donald 1988:347).

Jantjes (1995:297-298) found that teaching parents in the economically deprived community of Bishop Lavis in the Western Cape how to improve their home environment using the procedures of Dave (1963) had a number of positive outcomes. Not only did learners' school achievement improve, but parents were also more confident about consulting teachers and understood their children better. Moreover, the principal and teachers reported closer relationships with parents (Jantjes 1995:298). Jantjes (1995:296-297) noted that the involvement activities were manageable from the parent's perspective, and that these interventions were not costly. This is important in economically deprived communities.

Lemmer (2000:73-74) found parent involvement in a variety of different activities in black South African schools resulted in such benefits for teachers and educators as strengthened teacher professionalism, teacher empowerment, less stress, and more positive relationships with parents. Parents felt more appreciated and confident and learners noted a more positive atmosphere in the school and strengthened parental interest in home learning.

3.4.3 The current level of parental involvement in South Africa

Unfortunately, despite the evidence of the benefits of parental involvement both locally and internationally, parental involvement in South African schools has been found to be inadequate (Mkwanazi 1994:24; van Wyk 1999:iii; Heystek & Louw 1999:26; van Wyk 2001:120-121). Mkwanazi (1994:24) found that parental involvement in the Soweto schools she studied meant parents compensating for deficiencies in the school system and that no true involvement in terms of the content of children's education or school management was occurring.

In terms of Epstein's classification of parental involvement into six categories (Epstein 1995:704), evidence suggests that South African parents are involved in only very limited ways in their children's education.

Van Wyk (2001:120-121) found schools predominantly use conventional methods of involving families such as fundraisers, open-house days, and parent-teacher conferences. However, the teachers in Heystek's study noted only 19% "good" parental attendance at parent-teacher meetings. Furthermore, many of these schools did not have regular parent evenings (Heystek1999:104).

Parents were not provided with opportunities to be volunteers in the classroom (Heystek 1999: 103; van Wyk 2001:123). Parents in Heystek's study were more active in terms of attendance at sport and social functions (25.8% and 38.4% "good" participation respectively), and assistance with extramural activities and maintenance of the physical facilities of the school (18.5% and 31.5% "good" participation respectively) (Heystek 1999:104-105).

Parents were provided with limited opportunities to communicate with the school (van Wyk 2001:123). The majority of teachers only contacted the parents of

learners who were having problems at school (van Wyk 2001:121). Although 74% of primary school educators van Wyk studied, stated that they had a policy of involving parents in learning activities in the home, all admitted that they had never taught parents how to play a positive role in their children's school work and did not know how to do so (van Wyk 2001:122). Teachers in Heystek's study noted very little parental assistance with homework and in most of the schools he studied no provision was made for parental involvement in this area (Heystek 1999:103).

Teachers in van Wyk's study felt that parents' roles in decision-making should be limited to voting for, or serving on, the school's governing body (van Wyk 2001:123-124). These teachers felt that South African legislation had given these bodies too much decision-making power and that educators should not be in the position where they could be outvoted by parents (van Wyk 2001:124-125). Mkwanazi (1994:24) found that parents played a very limited role in school management. Heystek (1999:102-111) found that the teachers in his study noted that over 40% of parents participated in school management activities. This was one of the highest areas of parental involvement in his study. He suggests that this was probably because education policy necessitates this type of involvement. However, he found that despite legislation to the contrary, some schools did not have a governing body at all. Other recent studies have shown that most South African schools do not have governing bodies that have been elected and function in terms of education policy and that parents play little or no role in decision-making (Christie 2001:56-57; van der Westhuizen & Mosoge 2001:192).

Community involvement at these schools was limited to the use of the premises by outside groups and inviting speakers from the community, including parents, and various agencies to address the learners (van Wyk 2001:125).

3.4.4 Factors influencing the degree or type of parental involvement in South Africa.

As was found to be the case in other countries (see 2.7), various factors relating to the parent and family background, as well as the teacher and child have been found to influence the degree and type of parental involvement in South Africa.

3.4.4.1 The parents

Parental illiteracy and unemployment have been identified by South African educators as two of the biggest barriers to parental involvement (Mkwanazi 1994:29; Molepo 2000:83; van Wyk 2001:126). In contrast to this, Sitole (1993:123-124) found no significant differences in the involvement of employed and unemployed parents of underachieving children although, employed mothers were found to have a better attitude to the school than unemployed mothers.

In addition, Mkwanazi (1994:29) found parental age was one of the foremost reasons given by educators for the lack of parental involvement. Old parents were less involved (Mkwanzi 1994:29). Sitole (1993:124) found 30 to 40 year old mothers initiated more parent initiated involvement and had more positive attitudes to the school than either older or younger mothers. No significant difference was noted for fathers in these respects, however.

Parental marital status, and educational level of parents of underachieving children were also found not to be related to parental involvement, although married parents had a better attitude to the school (Sitole 1993:122,138).

However, many South African parents do not know why or how they can be involved and believe that they need not be involved since teachers are paid and qualified to educate their children (Heystek & Louw 1999:26; Rambinyana & Kok 2002:14). This finding was supported by van Wyk (2001:126) and van der

Westhuizen & Mosoge (2001:193), who found that one of the foremost reasons for non-involvement was lack of parental recognition of their responsibility in their children's education. Attempts to involve parents have been seen by viewed by some parents as the school not fulfilling its responsibility (Christie 2001:56). Some parents felt they should be paid for their involvement (Christie 2001:56). Further, parents were also not always confident that they could assist their children (Jantjes 1995:298).

Lack of time, particularly in the case of single mothers, was also identified by researchers as a major barrier to parental involvement (van der Westhuizen & Mosoge 2001:193; van Wyk 2001:126). Often in South African townships both parents work and get home very late such that meetings have to be scheduled on weekends. This is further complicated by the fact that parents have many weddings, funerals and other social commitments to attend on weekends (van Wyk 2001:126).

Mkwanazi (1994:27) found that one reason South African educators feel that some parents are not more involved in their children's schooling is simply the fact that they do not live with their children. Many parents leave their children with other family members in order to get jobs. She notes that these family members, often grandparents, are even more likely to be illiterate and unaware of their possible roles in the children's education.

South African educators also put forward barriers such as: lack of school resources, such as photocopiers; lack of transport; factional fighting amongst parents on tribal lines or due to political affiliations; and an unstable school environment reflected in teachers' strikes, low teacher morale, and school thefts (Mkwanazi 1994:28; Heystek 1999:109).

3.4.4.2 *The learners*

Foreign studies have provided evidence for factors relating to the nature of the child affecting the level and type of parental involvement (see 2.7.3). However, Sitole (1993:125) found child gender, birth order and sibling number to have no relationship with parental involvement.

3.4.4.3 *The teachers and schools*

Evidence suggests that the effort of teachers and schools to involve the parents is the decisive factor in terms of the amount and type of parental involvement that occurs in that community (see 2.7.4).

Unfortunately, South African teachers are not adequately prepared to work with families and members of the community (van der Westhuizen 2001:192; van Wyk 2001:127). The majority (67%) of educators in van Wyk's study did not believe that parent involvement was important for learner success (van Wyk 2001:121). The schools she studied in Gauteng did not have a written policy on school-family-community partnerships (van Wyk 2001:121). Moreover, most schools had never discussed family and community involvement as a way of improving schooling (van Wyk 2001:121). Teachers felt parents' primary role was to help with discipline (Christie 2001:56).

The emphasis in these schools tended to be on "fixing" rather than accommodating parents (van Wyk 2001:120). Educators felt that schools often viewed parents as difficult (van Wyk 2001:123). Many parental involvement activities did not even exist at the schools Heystek (1999:110) studied, suggesting that schools do not make provision for structures or opportunities for parental involvement. Moreover, the majority of educators did not recognise their own role in the lack of effective parental involvement (Heystek 1999: 110; van Wyk 2001:126).

3.4.5 Summary

Prior to this study no research had been done on parental involvement in Swazi schools. However, since South Africa has a fairly similar culture, South African research on parental involvement may be particularly relevant to Swaziland.

South African research indicates that parental involvement in South Africa offers the same sort of benefits as it does in other countries (see 2.4). Unfortunately however, South African schools presently offer parents only very limited and traditional forms of parental involvement. Schools are not enthusiastic about parents' volunteering in the classroom, do not teach parents how to help their children at home, resist legislation on parental involvement in governance structures, and communicate mostly when problems arise. Moreover, a large proportion of parents do not participate in the limited ways made available to them. Contributing factors include: parental illiteracy and unemployment; the parent perception that their children's education is not their responsibility; and a number of barriers of which some are universal, such as a lack of time, and some local, such as attendance of funerals and factional fighting. Older parents also tend to be less involved in their children's education. Teachers, whose roles are critical to successful parental involvement, were unprepared for parental involvement to the extent that many of them did not recognise the importance thereof.

3.5 Chapter summary and conclusions

At present the education system in Swaziland is organised in such a way that the vast majority of parents, whose children attend government or aided schools, are prevented from playing any role in many decisions concerning their children's education. Further, current Swazi education policy does not prioritise parental

involvement and assigns parents a very limited role in their children's education. This role includes a consultative role for parents in respect to curriculum changes and the determination of school fees, a role in school governance structures, a right to information, and a role in the financing of education. Moreover, what policy exists is not likely to be successfully implemented as parents' roles are not clearly elucidated, a budget has not been assigned to parental involvement, and teachers are not trained in parent involvement. This is very unfortunate as Swaziland desperately needs to improve learners' academic success and decrease the rate of school dropout. These are just a few of the positive outcomes of parental involvement.

South Africa's policy on parental involvement is also not comprehensive enough and implementation is also retarded by lack of clarity, inadequate teacher training and funding. However, South Africa has a clear and explicit policy on parental involvement in governance and advocacy and Swaziland would benefit from adopting a similar policy although this would require a more limited decision-making role for the Ministry of Education.

Since no research has been done in Swaziland on parental involvement, those studies conducted in neighboring, and culturally similar, South Africa are particularly relevant. These studies support foreign research in terms of the benefits of parental involvement and indicate that parental involvement in South Africa is inadequate for many of the same reasons that this is often the case internationally. There are, however, some barriers to parental involvement that are particularly prevalent in South Africa such as funeral attendance and parents not living with their children.

Before a parental involvement policy and programme can be designed for Swaziland, it is necessary to understand the nature of parental involvement in Swaziland especially in regard to the amount and type of parent involvement

initiated by parents and teachers presently. Further the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of parents and teachers in regard to parent involvement must be revealed (see 2.11). The methods and methodologies used to expose this information are discussed in Chapter 4.

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Chapter **4**

Methods and methodology

"There is general recognition among some researchers and even more practitioners that no one methodology can answer all questions and provide insights on all issues" (Rist 1977:42).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methodology to more completely investigate parental involvement in Swaziland. Quantitative analysis of the responses to a parental questionnaire was used to determine whether and to what degree parental involvement is initiated by teachers and parents. Teachers' and parents' perceptions, beliefs, and feelings about parental involvement were then explored through qualitative interviews.

4.1.1 The choice of methodology

There are essentially four major paradigms used in modern social science each with its own methodology (Gough 2000:9). These are the positivist, interpretive, critical and deconstructive paradigms (Connole 1993:32). Quantitative methodology is traditionally associated with the positivist paradigm while qualitative methodology is usually based on the interpretive paradigm (Firestone 1987:16).

4.1.1.1 *Positivism vs interpretivism*

Previously, followers of the interpretive paradigm had to vigorously defend their choice of methodology, and their epistemology and ontology (Rist 1977:42). The interpretive paradigm includes the belief in a reality that consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:6). Researchers who accept this ontology usually adopt an intersubjective and empathetic epistemology and use qualitative, often, interactional methodologies that rely on the subjective relationship between the researcher and subject to reveal the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:6). The interpretive paradigm is now widely accepted (van der Mescht 2002:44) and in fact, positivism, the dominant model of science

during the early and mid twentieth century (Lather 1993:90-91; Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:4), has almost become a dirty word in some social science circles (Lather 1993:90-91). The positivist paradigm refers to the acceptance of a stable unchanging, external reality, which can be investigated objectively usually by using an experimental, quantitative methodology, including the testing of hypotheses (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:6).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:5) note that it is detrimental to pretend that social science operates from within only a single paradigm. Each of these paradigms, and their associated methodologies, has been recognised to be of great value and to contribute a great deal to the social sciences and the improvement of educational practices (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:4). Gough (2000:5-8) comments that each of these paradigms views an issue from its own unique perspective because the researchers in each case are seeking a different type of knowledge. Thus, no paradigm or methodology is better than another. They simply provide different perspectives on reality. Spindler (1982:8) states, "There is no argument between qualification and quantification, even though some people who should know better maintain that there is."

4.1.1.2 *The relationship between quantitative and qualitative methodologies*

There is considerable debate over what the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methodologies should be (Firestone 1987:16).

The pragmatists believe that the researcher's choice of methodology should depend only on the purpose of the study, the questions being investigated and the resources available (Patton 1990:39). However, purists assert that the methodology a researcher uses has to be governed by the paradigm he/she accepts, as each paradigm is based on its own ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:6). Thus, the researcher's fundamental beliefs must determine whether he uses an empirical quantitative,

interpretive qualitative, critical or deconstructive poststructural methodology to gain understanding of social realities (van der Mescht 2002:45-46). Rist (1977:43) states, "All knowledge is social. The methods one employs to articulate knowledge of reality necessarily flow from beliefs and values one holds about the very nature of reality".

Methodology must, of course, be suited to the purpose of the research, the questions being investigated and the resources available, however, the author of this research believes that it is also necessary to reflect on one's fundamental beliefs and take these into account when choosing a methodology. Nevertheless, the view accepted in this research is in accordance with De Vos (2002:363), Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981:444), and others who are of the opinion, unlike the qualitative and quantitative purists, that this does not necessarily limit a researcher to the exclusive use of a single methodology. Like Firestone (1987:19), the author does not believe that one's method is as rigorously determined by one's choice of paradigms as the purists suggest.

Firestone (1987:20) points out that although the two methods are rhetorically different as they encourage the researcher to adopt certain conventions of presentation that advance certain kinds of argument for the credibility of his conclusions, the results of the two methodologies can be complementary. Further, he notes that both methodologies have been used by the same researchers in several studies to present the reader with different kinds of information. Spindler (1982:8) states, "...actually, quantitative and qualitative data and methods should be interdependent".

Despite his belief that choice of methodology flows from the researcher's choice of paradigm, Rist (1977:47) feels the researcher is able to choose which "paradigmatic spectacles" he wishes to wear. He states, "If we are serious about our quest for an understanding of the social reality about us and the causal

relations within it, then what may be most needed are researchers capable of wearing bi-focal or even tri-focal lenses". This is because in reality some of the phenomena being investigated in the social sciences are so enmeshed that a single approach cannot succeed in encompassing humans in their full complexity (De Vos 2002:364-369). De Vos also feels that, technically, quantitative and qualitative methods are inextricably intertwined.

The author is in agreement with these views and recognises the value and contributions of both the positivist and interpretive paradigms. Consequently, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed to more completely understand parental involvement, by illuminating it from two different perspectives.

4.1.1.3 *The use of quantitative methodology in this study*

A hypothetico-deductive quantitative methodology, in which empirical data is tested as objectively as possible, was used to determine whether certain generalisations about parental involvement found to exist in other parent populations (see 2.7) were also true for the parents of urban Swazi primary school children. The positivist paradigm is particularly well suited for attempting to gain this type of knowledge because of its methodology, which involves the testing of hypotheses (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:6). Moreover, the quantitative approach relies on collecting data from a large number of people and consequently has the advantage of resulting in a broad generalisable set of findings (Patton 1990:14) on which the design of a parental involvement programme for urban Swazi primary schools could be based.

Furthermore, this methodology was chosen because the author's fundamental beliefs are essentially those of positivists, thus, the author believed that the use of this methodology would lead to some knowable general truths about parental involvement in this community. The fact that this study had a practical, utilitarian

aim, namely the development of a parental involvement programme that would benefit the participants of education, again indicates the positivistic orientation of the study and the researcher (Janse van Rensburg 2001:13). A parental questionnaire was used to collect the data.

4.1.1.4 *The use of qualitative interpretive methodology in this study*

The decision to also make use of a qualitative interpretive methodology was based on a number of considerations. The author is not a quantitative purist and believed it was possible to make use of qualitative methodology as well by attempting to don the "paradigmatic spectacles" of the interpretive paradigm. This was made possible, by the author's appreciation of the interpretivist epistemology and ontology.

The author recognised that researchers are always to some extent subjective and that adopting the positivist paradigm, itself, implied a certain view of reality that would influence the results. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:4-5) note that the hypothetico-deductive methodology also produces "perspectival" knowledge. Thus, the author felt that some researcher subjectivity was unavoidable and that her values would have some impact on how she interpreted what was happening in any research situation. Nevertheless, the author differs from true interpretivists in respect to her beliefs on the degree of subjectivity that results (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:6). Further, the author, while recognising the usefulness of generalisations for pragmatic and predictive purposes, also believes that each individual's view of reality is unique, that these views are important, and that some knowledge of these individual perspectives is required to understand parental involvement more completely.

However, the main reason that qualitative research is used in this study is that the author agrees with one of the criticisms of quantitative research, that it tends to be too superficial (Spindler 1982:8). Consequently, qualitative research was

also conducted to get a different, more detailed, in-depth perspective on parental involvement (Spindler 1982:8; Gough 2000:8). Thus, the researcher, though not an interpretivist, also made use of a qualitative, interpretive, interactional approach using the method of parent and teacher interviews.

4.1.1.5 *The purpose of using a combined approach in this study*

While combining the two approaches is rare and challenging, and is objected to by purists from both approaches, it has been done and is recommended when a complete understanding of a phenomenon is sought (Patton 1990:14; De Vos 2002:364-365). A two-phase approach of quantitative and qualitative research (De Vos 2002:365) was followed in this study to gain a more complete picture of parental involvement in urban Swaziland.

The quantitative hypothetico-deductive methodology provided information on whether certain generalisations presented in the literature were also true for this population. This however, results in a less detailed, more abstract picture of a phenomenon (Firestone 1987:20). Qualitative interpretive methodology, complements the quantitative methodology, by providing detailed information on how a small group of individuals thought about, felt about and, experienced parental involvement. Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981:446) note that while quantitative methods are suited to identifying "how" individuals behave, qualitative methods are better equipped to answer the question "why".

Thus, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in this study is not primarily intended to make the results of this study more objective. Van der Mescht (2002:48), a qualitative purist, argues that combining methods with different underlying assumptions may present a fuller picture, but not a more objective one. However, operating from a primarily positivistic ontology, the author believes that there are some knowable general truths about parental involvement in Swaziland and that greater objectivity does result from the

combined use of both methods. Firestone (1987:20) notes that when these two methods have similar results, the findings are more robust and one can be more certain that the findings are not influenced by the methodology. In Chapter 6 the findings from the two different approaches are drawn together in order to gain a clear complete, and more reliable, picture of parental involvement in Swaziland on which an effective programme of parental involvement could be based.

4.2 The quantitative research

4.2.1 Introduction

Quantitative research using a parental questionnaire as a measuring instrument was done in order to test whether generalisations concerning the involvement of various groups of parents in other countries (see 2.7 and 3.4.4.1) also applied to Swazi urban primary school parents. Parental involvement was viewed from the perspectives of school initiated parental involvement, parent initiated parental involvement, and parental attitude to the school. The questionnaire was also used to determine the ways in which Swazi urban parents were involved in their primary school children's education and the efforts made by the schools to involve them.

4.2.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the literature study (see 2.7 & 3.4). Each of these hypotheses was stated for each of the three re-named sections of the parental questionnaire. Thus, each hypothesis was tested against the level of parental involvement defined, firstly, as school initiated parental

involvement (SIPI), secondly, as parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI), and, thirdly, as parental attitude to the school (PAS) (see 5.2).

It was necessary to test each hypothesis against SIPI, since this provides a measure of the teachers' and schools' efforts to involve the parents (see 5.2.2.1). These are critical in determining to what extent and in what way parents become involved (see 2.7.4). It was also important to determine, for each hypothesis, the level of parent initiated involvement as this provides an indication of how involved parents were in activities under their own control (see 5.2.2.2). The Swazi parental involvement programme must include ideas and ways to increase the involvement of all parents (see 2.11). Further, it was necessary to examine parental attitudes to the school, since negative attitudes may form a barrier to parental involvement (see 2.7.2.7).

4.2.2.1 *Hypothesis 1*

There is a significant difference between the average SIPI of parents of different socioeconomic status (SES).

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Although some researchers have found no relationship between general level of parental involvement and SES, others have often found that parents with a lower SES tend to be less involved in their children's education either generally or in terms of several types of parental involvement (see 2.7.2.1). Lower parental involvement of parents of lower SES suggests that these parents are less spontaneously involved than parents of higher SES and that more deliberate effort needs to be spent to involve parents with a poor SES at least in some types of activities. Parents from all backgrounds can become involved

productively when teachers motivate them (Epstein 1986:293; Shaver & Walls 1998:95).

Urban Swazi parents earn a wide range of incomes, as indicated by their living circumstances. Thus, it was necessary to determine whether more or different efforts would be required to involve parents of different SES.

4.2.2.2 Hypothesis 2

There is a significant difference between the average SIPI of parents with different levels of education.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Research suggests that parents with lower levels of education are generally less involved in their children's education or at least less involved in some types of parental involvement activities (see 2.7.2.1). South African educators have described parental illiteracy as the biggest barrier to parental involvement (see 3.4.4.1).

Swazi parents have a very wide range of education levels from those that have no formal education to those that hold university degrees. Thus, it was necessary to investigate whether the level of parental education affects the amount of parental involvement initiated by the parents or their attitude to the school. This would suggest the need for more effort or different techniques to involve parents with different levels of education. Further, it was important to determine whether teachers make different efforts to involve parents with different levels of education.

4.2.2.3 Hypothesis 3

There is a significant difference between the average SIPI of parents who have different home languages.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Many studies have shown that language differences form an important barrier between parents and schools (see 2.7.2.7). Although the home language of most parents in Swaziland is siSwati (see 3.2), all of the schools studied communicated with parents in English (see 4.2.4.1). Thus, it is possible that a communication barrier existed between most parents and the schools. This would have to be addressed by a parental involvement programme.

4.2.2.4. Hypothesis 4

There is a significant difference between the average SIPI of employed and unemployed parents.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Working parents have been found to volunteer less at the school but be more involved in their children's education at home (see 2.7.2.3). However, in her South African study van Wyk (2001:126) found that unemployed parents were less involved generally than employed parents, probably due to the stress that unemployment creates. This supports Mkwanazi's (1994:29) findings. Unemployment is also a serious problem in Swaziland. Moreover, economic concerns often force both parents to work long hours if they are employed. Thus, it was necessary to test whether unemployed parents initiated parental involvement activities at a different level from employed parents or had a

different attitude to the school. It was also necessary to establish whether the teachers and schools involved employed and unemployed parents differently.

4.2.2.5 Hypothesis 5

There is a significant difference in the average SIPI of single and married parents.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Many studies have show that even with SES controlled that single parents are less involved at the school than their married counterparts (see 2.7.2.4). However, Sitole (1993:142) found no relationship between marital status and general parental involvement in his South African study. Nevertheless, as is the case in many modern communities (Edwards & Jones-Young 1992:74) increasingly many Swazi mothers are unmarried (personal observation). Consequently, if differences in marital status effect levels of parental involvement this may have a great impact on parental involvement in Swazi schools and, hence, the design of a parental involvement programme for Swaziland.

4.2.2.6 Hypothesis 6

There is a significant positive correlation between SIPI and learners' achievement in mathematics.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Many authors, including Sitole (1993:142) who studied parental involvement in South Africa, have found a positive correlation between academic achievement and parental involvement (see 2.4). Mathematics and English are considered to

be particularly important school subjects (Hartog, Diamantis & Brosnan 1998:326) and Swazi teachers interviewed felt that achievement in these subjects was the best indicator of a learner's success in school. Learner grades, rather than standardised tests, were chosen as these have been found to be more sensitive to parental involvement (Desimone 1999:19-20) and are far easier to obtain. Thus, the learner's achievement in each of these subjects was used to determine whether there was a significant positive relationship between academic achievement and SIPI or PIPI.

Such a relationship might suggest that parental involvement benefits children as most researchers believe (see 2.10.2). Alternatively, because only correlation and not causation was tested, it might indicate, as Ma (1999:78) suggests, that the academic excellence of a child may encourage parental involvement. If this were the case a parental involvement programme may need to include special efforts to encourage the involvement of parents of poor achievers.

4.2.2.7 Hypothesis 7

There is a significant positive correlation between SIPI and learners' achievement in English.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

The correlation between learner's English achievement and parental involvement was investigated for the reasons explained in 4.2.2.6. A significant positive correlation would suggest that either parental involvement benefits children academically, or that children who do better in English encourage more parental involvement.

4.2.2.8 Hypothesis 8

There is a significant difference between the average SIPI of parents whose children attend different schools.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Different schools have different attitudes and adopt different theoretical stances towards the role of parents and towards parental involvement (see 2.7.4.3 and 2.7.4.4). Epstein and Dauber (1991:290) state, "Schools vary in how much and how well they inform and involve families". Research suggests this has a profound impact on the level and type of parental involvement that occurs (see 2.7.4). Thus, the different schools sampled may have different theoretical stances concerning parental involvement and consequently make different efforts to involve learners and have different levels of parental involvement. Furthermore, as Schools A and B were private and Schools C, D, and E were government subsidised and had much lower fees (see Table 4.1), differences in the SES of the parents may have contributed to differences in the levels of parental involvement (see 2.7.2.1). Schools with lower SES have been found to have lower levels of some types of parental involvement (see 2.7.4.3).

4.2.2.9 Hypothesis 9

There is a significant difference between the average SIPI of parents of different ages.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Educators in South Africa list older parental age as one of the most important barriers to parental involvement (Mkwanazi 1994:29). Thus, as Swazi parents fall

within a very wide range of ages from teenagers to much older parents (SASB 1999:14), it was necessary to determine whether age has any impact on the level of parental involvement, and suggest ways to overcome any barriers that might result from parental age.

4.2.2.10 *Hypothesis 10*

There is a significant difference between the average SIPI of male and female parents.

This hypothesis was also stated for PIPI and PAS.

Rationale

Evidence from several studies has shown that mothers are more involved in their children's education than fathers (Reay 1995:337; Standing 1999:58). This suggests that extra effort may be needed to involve fathers or remove any barriers that may exist to their involvement. This has implications for the design of an effective educational programme for Swaziland.

4.2.3 The pilot study

A pilot study was carried out shortly before the final design of the questionnaires was decided on. The pilot study involved five siSwati-speaking parents known to the author who had children attending urban Swazi primary schools. These parents' English language skills were believed to be similar to those of the majority of parents whose children attend Swazi urban schools. Each parent was asked to complete the questionnaire and then the wording and meanings of the various items were discussed with the parent. Friends were deliberately chosen for the pilot study in the hope that they would be more frank in their criticisms of

the questionnaire. These discussions resulted in the re-wording of several of the items (see 4.2.6.2).

4.2.4 The sample

4.2.4.1 *The school sample*

As government and aided schools are very similar (see 3.2), the sample schools were assigned to one of only two groups, private and government-subsidised (either fully or partly) schools. Both types of school were sampled since levels of parental involvement have been found to be different in schools of different SES (see 2.7.4.3) and to ensure that both types of urban Swazi primary school were represented in the sample. The proportions of parents in the sample whose children attended private schools and those whose children attended government subsidised schools was very similar to proportion of these parents in the urban population. However, private school children's parents formed a slightly higher proportion of the sample in order to make statistical comparisons between these two types of school possible. Private school parents form 8% of the sample (see Table 4.2) as opposed to the 3% that they actually make-up in this community (SGES 2001:43). The two private schools and three government-subsidised schools were selected at random from the Manzini and Mbabane urban regions. These two urban regions were chosen as Manzini and Mbabane are the two biggest urban areas in Swaziland. Consequently, schools chosen from these regions ought to be representative of urban Swazi primary schools. Coincidentally all five schools used English as the medium of instruction from Grade 1. The characteristics of the school sample are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of the schools sampled as of January 2003

School	Type of school	Number of learners	Grade 5 fees per annum (1US\$ = 8E)	Average class size	Size of Grade 5 class sampled in 2002	Questionnaire return rate
A	Private	197	E11 550	21.8	19	53%
B	Private	143	E4 905	20.4	14	62%
C	Government-subsidised	420	E2 460	30	47	86%
D	Government-subsidised	706	E 900	50.4	96 in two classes	89%
E	Government-subsidised	697	E1 176	49.8	100 in two classes	82%

The majority of the teachers at all of these schools, except School A, were black, Christian, siSwati speaking Swazis. This is true for most Swazi primary and secondary schools (SGES 2001:34). Thus, the culture of these schools primarily reflected Swazi culture and the majority of parents and teachers came from the same racial, ethnic, and cultural background (see Table 4.2).

4.2.4.2 *The parent sample*

Comprehensive sampling was done on the parents of the Grade 5 learners at the five schools in order to study parental involvement at senior primary level. Since six children were absent on the days that the questionnaires were sent home, 270 parents were sent questionnaires. Of these, 230 questionnaires were returned and 218 were usable. The remaining 12 were discarded because parents had failed to answer one or more sections thereof.

The mean return rate of the questionnaire in this study was 81%. This was higher than those of other studies. Epstein (1986:278) had a postal return rate of 59% of her questionnaires, while Gettinger and Guetschow (1998:41) had a 40% return rate. The high return rate of the questionnaires in this study increases the generalisability of the results and suggests that the parents were

enthusiastic to air their views. This may also be an indicator of parental co-operation to requests from the teacher (Becker in Epstein 1986:278).

The characteristics of the parent sample are shown in Table 4.2. As expected (see 3.2), the vast majority of parents were black siSwati speaking parents. However, the larger proportion of other language speakers and races in this population than in the general population (see 3.2), suggests that these other peoples are disproportionately present in urban areas.

Table 4.2 Characteristics of the parent sample (n = 218)

Parent characteristic	Percent*
Parent or Guardian:	
Parent	93.1
Guardian	6.9
Home Language:	
SiSwati	82.6
English	10.6
Portuguese	1.4
Other	5.0
Race:	
Black	90.0
Coloured	6.0
White	2.3
Age:	
20 to 30 yr.	11.0
30 to 40 yr.	50.5
Above 40 yr.	36.2
Marital status:	
Single	23.4
Married	71.6
Divorced	1.8
Remarried	0.5
Income:	
Less than E 18 000	28.3
E18 000 to E 52 000	42.9
More than E 52 000	28.78
School children attended:	
School A	5.0
School B	3.3
School C	17.0
School D	37.6
School E	37.1

* A few parents did not answer every question, as a result values do not always add up to exactly 100%.

4.2.5 The procedure

Several visits were made to each school. During the first visit the researcher met with the head-teacher, explained the study, and obtained permission for the study. An introductory letter (see Appendix I) and a copy of the parental questionnaire (see Appendix II) was given to each head-teacher to clearly convey the nature and purpose of the study, and obtain permission for the study. The introductory letter explained that the study would cause the minimum of disruption for learners and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity to all participants. Each school was promised a report of the findings and an introductory workshop on parental involvement for the parents and teachers of the participating classes. This was to encourage the head-teachers to give permission for the study. Appointments to hand out the questionnaires were then made with teachers. No school rejected participation in the study.

When the questionnaires were handed out the teacher recorded the number of the parent questionnaire given to each learner on the class list so that she/he would later be able to record the learners' second term mathematics and English grades using the same numbers. The purpose of the questionnaire, and the voluntary and confidential aspects thereof, were explained to the learners and they were told when to return the parent questionnaires to the school.

The returned questionnaires and the marks recorded by the teachers were collected a few days later. The parents' responses were coded and transferred to answer sheets before being entered into the computer for analysis.

4.2.6 The measuring instrument

4.2.6.1 *Introduction*

A questionnaire was used, as this instrument is suited to testing hypothesis. Questionnaires are considerably less time-consuming than interviews and other methods and, thus, can be used to gain information from a large sample of respondents quickly and easily. They have the additional advantages of being relatively economical, having standardised questions, and being able to ensure anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:238).

A parental questionnaire, rather than a teacher or other educator questionnaire was chosen because parents are in a better position to know to what extent and in what ways they are involved in activities that are not based at the school. Involvement in home based activities necessarily was included in the questionnaire as these have been found to be particularly crucial in terms of positive child outcomes (see 2.7.6).

4.2.6.2 *Choice of a questionnaire*

An existing questionnaire with established reliability, validity, and suitability to southern African conditions (Sitole 1993:87-89) was modified for use in this study. Parents were invited to complete a modified version of Sitole's self-rating parental questionnaire (see Sitole 1993:146-148). Sitole had adapted Epstein and Becker's Form 2-P, 1987 questionnaire to suit the South African context. The original self-rating scale was found by its authors to be extensive enough to yield a valid measure of parental involvement (Epstein & Becker in Sitole 1993:85).

This instrument was chosen because it measured the two determinants of parental involvement (see 2.6). Section C, "school initiated contact", contained items that indicated the teachers and schools efforts to initiate involvement and involve parents. The items in Section B, "parent initiated contact", measured the

degree to which parents were taking the opportunities they had, as a result of the schools efforts to involve them or their status as parents, to be involved. In addition, Section A examined the parents' attitude to the school. This has been found to influence the degree that parents are involved (see 2.7.2.7).

Further, this questionnaire contained items from Epstein's (1995:704) six areas of parental involvement. Thus, parents' responses to the individual items of the questionnaire, each of which describes a specific parental involvement activity, indicated areas of strength and weakness in-terms of parental involvement in these areas in urban Swazi primary schools. Knowledge of this was essential for the design of an effective parental involvement programme (see 2.11).

4.2.6.3 *The final questionnaire*

The final, modified, questionnaire (see Appendix II) had 54 self-rating items and 12 biographical items, which made it comprehensive without being so cumbersome as to put parents off completing it or to threaten its reliability (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:232).

Items 14, 15, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, and 46 to 54, were not originally present in Sitole's questionnaire. They were adopted from the literature, as these are vital aspects of parental involvement (see 2.4).

In addition, a few modifications were made in the language and vocabulary of a few of the items that the pilot study (see 4.2.3) suggested were not clearly understood. This was necessary to ensure the reliability of the test (Irwin 2002: Box E). Modifications were made to items 7, 12, 21, 23, 28, 30, 34, 43 and 44 and in the opening statements of Sections A, B and C. These items were re-worded with the help of the respondents of the pilot study so they would be clearer and more applicable to the Swazi situation. The opening statements were intended to be clear and inviting.

Section D was designed to investigate the relationship between parental involvement and socioeconomic factors, race/ethnicity, home language, parental education level and other family background variables that the literature suggests have an impact on the degree and type of parental involvement (see 2.7). Categories were used for the questions on age and income as these are sensitive questions and are more likely to be answered if categories are used (Irwin 2002:13).

4.2.6.4 *Translation of the questionnaire*

Dr. C. Tsabedze of the English Department of the University of Swaziland translated the questionnaire into siSwati (see Appendix III). Schools were given the choice of using either the English or siSwati version, or both. This was done to give siSwati speaking parents the opportunity to respond in their own language and to increase response rate as it was felt that the parents may feel daunted by pages of questions in English. However, teachers at all five schools insisted that parents would not want to answer the questionnaires in siSwati, since they expected the school to communicate with them in English, the language of communication and instruction at these schools. The very high return rate of questionnaires (see Table 4.1) suggests that the second language questionnaire did not present a significant obstacle to most parents.

4.2.6.5 *Features to ensure maximum response*

The self-rating questionnaire and biographical questions simply required that the correct response be circled. This was done to ensure that the minimum amount of effort was required to complete the questionnaire, in the hope that this would improve response rate, and to ensure that responses were unambiguous and could be easily processed statistically. The anonymity of the questionnaire was also, in part, to encourage a high response rate.

In order to encourage parents to complete the questionnaire a cover letter and an empty envelope were included with every parent questionnaire (see Appendix II). The envelope was included to protect anonymity. The cover letter introduced the questionnaire and explained the purpose and importance of the study. The brevity of the questionnaire was noted in the cover letter, to encourage parental participation. It was also worded to make participation in the survey sound like a privilege. It explained clearly that completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and that the results would be anonymous and confidential. Parents were also informed of when questionnaires should be returned to the school and that each child would be rewarded with a few sweets on their return. A contact telephone number and postal address were given so that parents could ask questions and send their replies postally if they preferred.

4.2.7 Validity and reliability

In order for the quantitative findings to form an appropriate basis for the design of a parental involvement programme for urban senior Swazi primary school education, they must be valid and reliable.

4.2.7.1 *Reliability*

The reliability of the study refers to the consistency of measurement, the extent to which, if the study were repeated, it would give the same results (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:168). Reliability is a necessary condition for validity (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:232). There were several indications that the study had high reliability.

Standard conditions of data collection and processing enhance reliability (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:231). Test administration was uniform. Tests were self-administered. The same cover letter, introducing and explaining the study

was sent to all parents and all were given the same amount of time to complete the questionnaire. All responses were coded and entered into data sheets for computer analysis by a single researcher. The use of a closed form questionnaire resulted in higher objectivity but also in some loss of accuracy and variability (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:243).

The pilot test (see 4.2.3) established that the language and reading level of the questionnaire were appropriate. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:231) note that these are criteria for reliability.

Although stability and equivalence tests of reliability were not possible in this study (see 5.4), the reliability of the measuring instrument was established by measuring the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The alpha reliability coefficient for each section was close to 1 (see Table 5.6) and was within the acceptable range of reliability (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:227).

4.2.7.2 *Validity*

Validity refers to the extent that a study measures what it claims to measure (Borg & Gall 1989:249-250). Analysis of the study suggests it had very high internal validity and high external validity.

a) Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the extent that extraneous variables that might interfere with the results are controlled (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:172). The internal validity of the study was enhanced by the random selection of the five schools. Threats to internal validity such as history, statistical regression, pretesting, instrumentation, subject attrition, maturation, diffusion of treatment and treatment replications (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:173-178) did not apply to this study.

The main threat to internal validity in this study was subject effects (Cullingford & Morrison 1999:255) in the PIFI section. In order to reduce the chance of participants giving socially acceptable rather than true answers, parents were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, participants knew that the study was about parental involvement and may still have biased their responses towards social acceptability. Unfortunately, it was not possible to disguise the purpose of the study by making it wider ranging. This was because the questionnaire was already relatively long and parents would be less likely to complete it if it was even longer, and due to ethical considerations (full disclosure). However, some items in this section received a high percentage of negative responses (see 5.7), suggesting that socially acceptable responses did not pose a great threat to the internal validity of this study.

The content validity of the questionnaire had been established by Epstein (see 4.2.6.2) a well-respected researcher in the field. Factor analysis established the construct validity of the questionnaire (see 5.2). Thus, the quantitative findings had high internal validity.

b) External validity

External validity refers to the degree to which the findings can be generalised (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:179). A very small number of urban schools were sampled (n=5). Nevertheless, the sampling was random and personal observation suggested that these schools were generally representative of urban Swazi primary schools in terms of their facilities and teacher and learner characteristics. The proportion of parents whose children attended private schools and those whose children attended government subsidised schools in the sample reflected the proportion of each of these groups of parents in the urban population (see 4.2.4.1). The large parent sample (n=218) and very high return rate of the questionnaire (see 4.2.4.2) also increased the generalisability of the

findings. Consequently, the findings are probably generalisable to the senior urban Swazi Primary school parent population as a whole.

4.2.8 Ethical considerations

Questionnaires should be anonymous and confidential (Wolfendale 1999:164). Cover letters making this assurance as well as assurances of the voluntary nature of completing the questionnaire were sent to the parents. Anonymity was maintained throughout the study by assigning a number to each parent questionnaire. Teachers then noted the number of each parent questionnaire so that they could use only that number when recording learner marks.

All interviews and opening statements were given or written in language that respected the dignity of participants (Wolfendale 1999:166). Permission to do the study and make use of learners' grades was requested from the schools. Learners were given a few sweets on return of their parents' questionnaires to encourage them not to forget to give their parents these questionnaires. Modest gifts were given to the teachers to thank them for their participation. In other studies (Grolnick *et al* 1997:540; Zellman &Waterman 1988:373) parents and teachers have been paid or given other token rewards for their time.

Unfortunately, after the completion of a study, schools often never hear from researchers again (Irwin 2002:8). This leaves the respondents and communities feeling abused and perceiving no benefit from their input (Irwin 2002:8). The head-teacher of School D had had this experience and was reluctant, as a result, to grant permission for the study. Thus, to ensure that the school, learners, and parents also benefited directly from the research, the researcher gave each school a report of the findings, which included a brief review of the literature on parental involvement. Furthermore, the researcher offered to host a parental

involvement workshop at each school. These workshops were given at two of the five schools, Schools C and D. The other three schools showed no interest in the workshops.

4.2.9 Processing of the results

Factor analysis was conducted on the non-biographical part of the questionnaire (Sections A, B & C) to determine the construct validity of the questionnaire (Child 1976:45). This was followed by item analysis on all of the items of these three sections to determine whether any of the items should be omitted (Schnel 2001:105). The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by calculating the alpha reliability coefficient for each section (Pienaar 1994:78).

Two-tailed t-tests, the F-test or the Pearson Product Moment correlation were used to test the hypotheses (Clarke & Cooke 1986: 254-373). The t-tests were used when differences in the averages of two groups were being examined and the F-test, followed by the Bonferroni technique in the case of a significant difference, was used when more than two groups were being investigated. The Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to test hypotheses 6 and 7. The percentage of each of the four possible parental responses for each item in section A, B and C was also calculated to determine areas of strength and weakness in parental involvement in Swaziland. These findings are presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3 The qualitative research

4.3.1 Introduction.

As discussed in 4.1 a qualitative approach was taken in order, primarily, to obtain detailed in-depth knowledge and understanding of parental involvement in this community and the subjective meanings, beliefs and perspectives of parents and teachers on this phenomenon. Thus, the qualitative research was intended to provide detail and depth to the more generalisable, but also more superficial, view of parental involvement expected from the quantitative research (Spindler 1982:8). Both types of research were done with the creation of a programme for parental involvement in Swaziland in mind.

The qualitative research done was descriptive and followed an ethnographic approach in many respects. However this was not true ethnography. Firstly, because this research was undoubtedly aimed at educational reform and was thus, utilitarian and pragmatic in nature. This runs beyond the goal, or even contrary to the goal, of true ethnography which is simply to help one understand how particular social systems work (Wolcott 1987:53). Secondly, the purpose of this research was not strictly cultural interpretation and, thus, it cannot be considered to be ethnography (Wolcott 1987:43). However, while this research only "borrowed" ethnographic techniques (Wolcott 1987:53), it was not focussed simply on gaining evidence but also hoped to illuminate and provide understanding of parental involvement in Swazi senior urban primary schools.

Although it is difficult to make the ethnographic approach explicit (Wolcott 1987:45), this will be attempted in the following sections.

4.3.2 The different phases of the qualitative research and their aims

The qualitative research involved two different phases. An initial phase consisted of nine individual teacher interviews and was done to determine the teachers' views, feelings, perspectives on, and attitudes to, parental involvement. Research into teachers' thinking and beliefs, in terms of parental involvement, and reflection on how these may facilitate or restrict parental involvement is necessary for the design of an effective parental involvement programme which must include ways to help teachers have positive beliefs and perceptions of parental involvement (Newport 1992:52). The design of an effective programme of parental involvement also requires knowledge of the levels and types of parental involvement occurring at these schools so that weaknesses can be addressed. Thus, these interviews were also intended to shed light on teachers' experiences of parental involvement, their perceptions of parental attitudes to involvement, and the school's stance on these matters as well. This phase of the research was carried out during the period when the quantitative parental questionnaires were handed-out and collected.

The second phase of qualitative research occurred almost a year later and consisted of two teacher group discussions and six parent interviews. These interviews were done after an attempt had been made to inform these teachers and parents about parental involvement. These interviews were designed to probe how teachers and parents envisaged, on the basis of their new knowledge, a parental involvement programme for Swaziland.

Observation was ongoing throughout the two years over which the study was done.

4.3.3 The research instrument

Cantrell (in van der Mescht 2002:46) notes that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. The researcher is the medium through which the interpreted world is presented (van der Mescht 2002: 46-47). Patton (1990:14) states, "Validity in qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork".

The qualitative researcher must have good communication skills and be able to listen effectively (Winegardner undated:3). Sensitivity not only to one's own personal biases, but also to all the verbal and non-verbal data, the overt and hidden agendas, and all the cues and nuances of the people and settings is essential (Winegardner undated:3). Further an atmosphere of trust and a rapport must be established with the participants (Winegardner undated:3).

Thus, the researcher is central to qualitative research and it is important to note the characteristics of the researcher, which may either facilitate or hinder the research (van Wyk 1996:153).

4.3.3.1 *Differences in ethnicity, language, and gender*

The researcher is an English-speaking woman from a western cultural background. The majority of interviewees were Swazi siSwati speaking men and women.

The interviews were held in English. Most urban Swazis speak very good English and use this language daily in work related situations (personal observation). The teachers interviewed taught in English. During the interviews all the parents and teachers used the language confidently and the language difference did not obviously create any barrier between the interview participants and researcher.

The researcher is familiar with Swazi culture since she has lived and worked in Swaziland for the past ten years in an integrated community. Thus, she was sensitive to how to approach a Swazi interviewee and ask questions that would elicit responses without offending the interviewee. Furthermore, while interviewees may have been less open towards her due to cultural differences, cross-ethnic interviewing can have the advantage that the interview participants may expend more effort on explaining their ethnic experiences to someone who does not share them (Rubin & Rubin 1995:111). This did occur on several occasions during the interviews.

Rubin and Rubin (1995:111) note that the nature of the topic often determines whether gender differences form a barrier. The gender difference between the interviewer and the male interviewees did not seem to be an inhibiting factor in any of the interviews. This was probably because topics relating to education were being discussed. Male parents and teachers are used to discussing topics relating to education with females, since the majority teachers in Swaziland are female (SGES 2001:58).

Since women wearing pants is considered disrespectful by conservative Swazis, the researcher wore modest skirts or dresses on all occasions when she saw interviewees, but still chose outfits that corresponded with her essential identity (Euvrard 2002:8).

4.3.3.2 Similarities between the researcher and the interviewees

There were a number of similarities between the researcher and the interviewees that may have encouraged the interviewees to be more open and responsive.

Firstly, the researcher is the mother of two young boys, one of primary school age, so she could empathise with the experiences of the parents. On many

occasions just the mention of these boys warmed the atmosphere of the interview considerably.

Secondly, the researcher is a teacher and was able to relate to the other teachers' experiences easily. The fact that she had worked in a local well-known government high school for several years helped to form a bond between the researcher and the government school teachers. At the time of the study she was working in a private high school and, thus, had a bond with the private school teachers interviewed.

Rubin and Rubin (1995:114) warn that people talk differently to "ivory-tower" academics, however, this effect was minimised by approaching the interviewees as a fellow parent or teacher rather than as an academic. Similar qualifications and the fact that many of the interviewees were engaging in further studies meant there was little difference in status between the researcher and the teachers interviewed. The parents interviewed were well educated and many held very high positions in their companies so the researcher's status should not have been intimidating to them.

4.3.3.3 Role and relationships

The researcher was unknown to the participants of the study prior to the study. This increases the reliability of the study (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:386).

Aside from the head-teacher at School D, who was initially suspicious of the researcher's intentions (see 4.2.8), all the teachers were friendly towards the researcher from the outset. The suspicion, hostility and the antipathy towards researchers noted by some researchers in South Africa (Irwin 2002:Box G), was absent. Teachers became even more open and friendly as the study progressed and they came to know and trust the researcher more.

Although a few teachers were reluctant to be interviewed before the interviews, all interviewees seemed to be comfortable and enthusiastic during the interviews. Questions were answered in a free and open way. Most of the teachers and all of the parents interviewed thanked the researcher for giving them an opportunity to express their views. Good rapport seemed to have been achieved with the interviewees. Nevertheless, teachers and parents did not feel they would have the time to be interviewed repeatedly.

4.3.3.4 *Values and biases*

The researcher is a value-based research instrument who interacts with local values but is also in the position to identify and take into account, to some extent, those resulting biases (Lincoln & Guba 1985:39-40). The researcher must be sensitive to how her own biases and subjectivity may effect the study and findings (Winegardner undated:3). Van der Mescht (2002:46) notes that our values shape the way we make sense of what is happening in a research situation. Thus, before starting the interviews, and during the interviews and data analysis, in fact at every stage in the research, the researcher thought carefully about her values on the topic of parental involvement in the hope that this would help her to take into account any resulting biases (Lincoln & Guba 1985:39-40).

The researcher greatly values education believing it to be incredibly important to a child's success and well-being as an adult. She believes that parents have an essential role in their children's education and that ideally this role should be full parental participation in their children's education (see 2.2) according to Swap's Partnership Model (see 2.7.4.4). Responsible parents and good teachers will embrace parental involvement once they understand it.

The researcher expected less educated parents to be less involved in their children's education. She expected teachers in the government-subsidised

schools to be less open-minded about the parent's role. The researcher expected parents to want a partnership role once they became aware of parental involvement. Teachers were expected to be hostile to parents contributing to decisions on curriculum and teaching methods and suspicious of parent volunteers. These expectations before the interviews would have affected the researcher's interpretation of the data and thus, must be taken into account.

The researcher had no difficulty showing interest during the interview but it was more difficult for her to respond in a completely neutral, non-judgmental way (Euvrard 2002:10). The researcher attempted to be encouraging and understanding but could not always hide her approval of the unexpected open-mindedness and dedication of the majority of teachers.

4.3.4 The "problem" of subjectivity

Van der Mescht (2002:46) notes that qualitative researchers should not apologise for the subjectivity inherent in their method. He states, "Far from being a weakness then, the subjective engagement of the researcher is one of the greatest strengths of qualitative research" (van der Mescht 2002:47). However, subjectivity is a challenge as it puts strong demands on the empathy and competency of the interviewer (van der Mescht 2002:47).

Triangulation, in which the researcher draws on more than one source of data or uses more than one method of data collection, has become an integral part of qualitative research (van der Mescht 2002:47). However, van der Mescht (2002:48) notes that to use triangulation to gain greater objectivity implies that there is only one true social reality which researchers are trying to measure, which goes completely against interpretivist ontology. From an extreme subjectivist position, triangulation by interviewing a number of respondents for

the purpose of a more objective picture is impossible, although it is still desirable for completeness (van der Mescht 2002:48).

The researcher is, however, operating from a postivist approach and is trying to don the "paradigmatic spectacles" of the interperative pardigm. Thus, she, like many other researchers (van Wyk 1996:169), believes that greater objectivity, in addition to a more complete picture, can be obtained through the use of different techniques and participants. Thus, the use of observation in addition to the interviews in this study as well as the use of both teacher and parent interviews is believed to enhance the validity of the results.

In addition, although triangulation usually refers to this sort of use of multiple qualitative methods or respondents, it has also been used to describe the situation where researchers choose to combine quantitative and qualitative methodology in order to increase validity and reliability (De Vos 2002:365). Consequently, two types of triangulation have been used in this study to increase the validity of the results.

4.3.5 Data collection

Three data collection strategies were used: individual interviews; focus group interviews; and observation. The interviews were the primary strategy and were done in two sessions almost a year apart. Observation took place at visits to the schools and school events. Wolcott (1987:49) notes that he would never want the two methods perfectly in balance as meanings and actions compete for the researchers closest attention. Interviewing felt more right to the researcher than observation so this method predominated (Wolcott 1987:49). Van Wyk (1996:165) notes, "Since communication is the most basic form of human

interaction, it follows that the analysis of the content of this communication is a justifiable basis from which to understand human activity and behaviour.”

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were used. An attempt was made to create interview protocols that gave the interviewee plenty of time and space to relate their meanings rather than, merely, their opinions. van der Mescht (2002:47) notes that many “semi-structured” interviews are over structured with questions too closely bound to theory such that respondents have little space to give meaning to their reality through language, metaphor, anecdote and symbol.

4.3.5.1 *Individual teacher interviews*

Individual, rather than group, interviews were chosen for the initial part of the study as at this stage the teachers had not been exposed to the literature on parental involvement and did not know what they “ought” to believe. Thus, in individual interviews, they would not be influenced by the perceptions and opinions of their colleagues and a more valid account of their own meaning would result.

a) The informants in the individual teacher interviews

While the school’s head-teacher plays a crucial role in determining the nature and extent of parental involvement at the school (Epstein 1987a: 131), teachers rather than head-teachers were interviewed for two reasons. Firstly, the researcher felt that the head-teacher’s actual beliefs and actions in respect to parent involvement would be clearly revealed, either directly or indirectly, by the responses of the teachers. Further, the teachers would probably not feel that the head-teacher’s policy reflected on them and would, thus, be more inclined to give true rather than socially acceptable responses. Secondly, it was the aim of these interviews to illumine parental involvement as it really exists in these schools rather than what the head-teacher, or school policy, feels should be happening. It was felt that this information could be better ascertained through

interviewing the teachers themselves who usually have more contact with the parents and whose actions, feelings and beliefs greatly influence the degree or ways that parents are involved (see 2.7.4).

The informants were nine Grade 5 teachers from the five schools. Purposeful sampling was done to increase the utility of the information obtained (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:378). Comprehensive sampling was done, the main criterion being that the Grade 5 teachers interviewed were those that saw the learners most often and were, thus, those teachers most likely to have contact with Grade 5 learners' parents. In Schools C and D this was a class teacher who taught the learners everything. In these schools the number of teachers interviewed reflects the number of Grade 5 streams. In School E one teacher taught both Grade 5 streams half the subjects and the other taught both classes the other half of the subjects; so both were interviewed. In Schools A and B the "class" teacher taught most of the subjects but other teachers taught mathematics, science and second languages. The class and mathematics teachers were interviewed since they saw the learners most often.

Grade 5 teachers were interviewed, as this is the first year of senior primary phase. Further, as the data collection was expected to take place over several years, the researcher wanted to these children and their parents to be available at the school for a few years.

Some of the characteristics of the teachers are shown in Table 4.3. Teachers' names were changed to ensure anonymity. All parent and teacher names were chosen to reflect the nationality of the teachers. The teachers were Swazi with the exception of Ms. Crawford, Mr. Reed, and Mr. Nkunita. Thus, the majority of teachers came from the same racial, ethnic, and cultural background as the majority of the parents (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.3 Some characteristics of the teachers interviewed individually

Teacher	School	Private or government subsidised	Gender	Subject taught	Qualifications	Years of teaching experience
Mr. Reed	A	Private	Male	Mathematics	D.P.E & P.B.M.D	10
Ms. Crawford	A	Private	Female	Class	B.A.(Hons.) & H.E.D.	22
Ms. Costa	B	Private	Female	Class	none	7
Mr. Fortune	B	Private	Male	Mathematics	B.Sc.	1
Mr. Nkunita	C	Government subsidised	Male	Class	H.E.D.	17
Ms. Dube	D	Government subsidised	Female	Class	D.P.E	4
Ms. Malaza	D	Government subsidised	Female	Class	D.P.E & D.A.E	4
Mr. Nyoni	E	Government subsidised	Male	Mathematics	D.P.E	14
Mr. Fakudze	E	Government subsidised	Male	English	D.P.E	10

D.P.E – Diploma in primary education
H.E.D – Higher Education diploma
D.A.E- Diploma in adult education

B.A.(Hons) - Bachelor of Arts with honours
B.Sc - Bachelor of Science
P.B.M.D - Post graduate business managerial diploma

b) The procedure used for the individual teacher interviews

After visiting the head-teachers and gaining permission to do the interviews the researcher was introduced to each of the teachers. Appointments were then made for her return to the school, at a time convenient to the teachers, to carry out the interviews. The interviews were done in comfortable, quiet surroundings, whenever possible. The teacher always chose the location of the interview. Although all locations were private and the interviewee should have had no fears of being overheard, several locations were noisy. This is especially true for the interviews of Mr. Fakudze and Mr. Nyoni which were done in their classrooms while the children made a great deal of noise just outside them. Mr. Reed, Ms. Crawford, Mr. Fortune and Ms. Costa also chose to be interviewed in their, far quieter, classrooms. Mr. Nkunita chose a quiet spot outside his classroom under a tree and Ms. Malaza and Ms. Dube chose to be interviewed in their staffroom. Few interruptions occurred. All the interviews were done during school time, at the teacher's request.

Permission was obtained to record the interviews on video. The interviews took about 30 min each. A typed interview guide (see Appendix IV) was used to ask a series of questions. Wording and order of questions was changed, questions added and responses explored during the interview to ensure clear, thorough and accurate responses. When questions were misunderstood the interviewee was left to complete his response and then the questions were re-worded and asked again. Since most of the teachers were not first language English speakers and came from different cultural backgrounds this was important and was a considerable advantage over questionnaires.

The interviews were done in a courteous and respectful manner and teachers were thanked for their time and help and given a small gift.

c) The interview guide used for the individual teacher interviews

The teacher interview was designed to encourage teachers to relate their beliefs, attitudes, meanings, and values concerning the involvement of parents generally in their children's education. It was essential to investigate teachers' beliefs on parental involvement and on ideal levels of parental involvement, as it is only with the enthusiastic cooperation of teachers that parental involvement programmes can hope to be successful (see 2.7.4). Secondly, questions were included that were meant to reveal the teachers' perceptions of how involved the parents really were, how satisfied teachers were with current levels of contact between teachers and parents, and what they felt the barriers to this involvement may be. Thirdly, some questions were included simply to access the teachers' knowledge of what type of opportunities the school created for parental involvement.

All questions were open-ended to allow for unanticipated answers, probing in more depth and because, this type of item is far better suited to revealing the respondents true values, beliefs, knowledge and meanings than fixed-alternative

items (Euvrard 2002:5). Care was taken not to include negative, leading, "catch-all", and double questions (Euvrard 2002:7). When the responses of the interviewees indicated that they were unfamiliar with certain words, questions were re-phrased with synonyms or examples were given to explain the word. The interview guide (see Appendix IV) was intended to serve only as very basic outline of the topics that were to be included. None of the questions were asked in the way they were written in the guide. The phrasing of the questions and the order they were asked changed according to the conditions of each interview. This approach was used so as not to constrain the naturalness and relevancy of the responses (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:426). In many cases teachers answered the questions in the guide spontaneously before they were even asked. In order to ensure that the responses of the interviewees were correctly understood, the interviewer attempted to summarise what had been related to her and asked the interviewees if this summation was correct.

4.3.5.2 Focus group discussions

Approximately six months after the individual interviews, each of the five schools was sent a report which included a brief explanation of the nature and importance of parental involvement, an overview of the quantitative findings, and unique suggestions for increasing parental involvement at that school. Focus group discussions were held at two of the schools several months later. The head-teachers of the schools promised to give their teachers copies of the report and to discuss it with them before the focus group discussions. Consequently, the original aim of these group discussions was to determine how the teachers envisaged a future parental involvement programme at their school, based on their new understanding of parental involvement. It was felt that group discussions would provide the ideal opportunity for brainstorming on the schools future plans for parental involvement.

However, the interviewer discovered at the start of the group discussions, that only the head-teacher at School C, and the deputy at School D, had read the report. The other teachers were not even aware of its existence. Consequently, most teachers in the group discussion had no new knowledge of parental involvement and had not given thought to the school's future in this respect. Hence, the group discussions were also used to investigate the teachers' beliefs, feelings, understanding of, and experiences of parental involvement and served to triangulate the findings of the individual interviews.

Group discussions have the advantage of providing a supportive atmosphere that encourages participants to disclose attitudes and behaviour that they may not reveal in an individual interview (Folch-Lyon & Trost 1981:445). Discussion in a group can stimulate recall, re-evaluation of previous statements, and result in opinion elaboration (Lofland & Lofland 1984:14).

Successful focus groups are characterised by interactions between the members of the group, rather than alternation between the interviewer's questions and the participants' responses (Adams & van Harmelen 2000:26). Conversation flowed fairly freely between the participants although the interviewer did have to ask questions occasionally to maintain the momentum of the discussion. In each focus group discussion there were one or two dominant speakers but they did not talk to the exclusion of everybody else and were more inclined to "fill in the silences" than to prevent their colleagues from having the opportunity to speak.

a) The informants in the focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were done at only two of the original five schools, Schools C and D. These schools were chosen as their head-teachers were enthusiastic about the parental involvement workshop and were willing to arrange the focus group discussions as a result. Spindler (1982:8), notes that a good ethnographic study that gives accurate knowledge of one setting, which is

not markedly dissimilar from other relevant settings, is likely to be generalisable to a substantial degree to these other settings. Thus, the choice of these two schools was particularly fortuitous since Schools C and D were typical government subsidised schools (personal observation). Thus, the findings from these focus group discussions may be generalisable to many urban Swazi primary schools.

Comprehensive sampling was done (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:379). All the senior primary teachers that were available were interviewed. All six senior primary teachers and the head-teacher of School C were present at the discussion. The biographical data of the teachers who attended the group discussion at School C are shown in Table 4.4. Teachers' names were changed to ensure anonymity. All teachers were Swazi except Ms. Wade and Mr. Nkunita. Again this illustrates the racial, ethnic, and cultural congruency between these schools and their parent community (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.4 Some characteristics of teachers participating in the focus group discussion at School C.

Name	Age	Gender	Grade taught	Teaching qualifications
Ms. Wade	48	Female	Head-teacher	D.P.E.
Ms. Mamba	48	Female	7	D.A.E. & D.P.E
Mr. Mduli	31	Male	7	D.P.E.
Mr. Nkunita	39	Male	6	H.E.D.
Ms. Mazibuko	45	Female	6	D.P.E.
Ms. Nsibande	28	Female	5	D.P.E.
Ms. Thwala	31	Female	5	D.P.E.

D.P.E – Diploma in primary education D.A.E- Diploma in adult education
H.E.D – Higher Education diploma

In School D only three of the possible six senior primary teachers were present, one each from Grade 5, 6 and 7. The head-teacher was not present but the

deputy was. Although an appointment had been made for the discussion, at a time chosen for its suitability by the head-teacher, the teachers and deputy did not know about it and the head-teacher had, apparently, forgotten. The biographical data of the teachers who took part in the discussion at School D is shown in Table 4.5. Teachers' names have been changed to ensure anonymity. All teachers were Swazi.

Table 4.5 Some characteristics of teachers participating in the focus group discussion at School D.

Name	Age	Gender	Grade taught	Teaching qualifications
Ms. Makhubu	48	Female	Deputy, Grade 7	B.Ed.
Mr. Dladla	44	Male	7	B.A & D.P.E.
Ms. Malaza	44	Female	6	D.P.E. & D.A.E.
Ms. Bhembe	47	Female	5	D.P.E.

D.P.E – Diploma in primary education

B.Ed – Bachelor of Education

D.A.E- Diploma in adult education

B.A.- Bachelor of Arts

b) The procedure used for the focus group discussions

The nature and aim of the discussions was explained to the head-teachers. Permission to do the discussions was obtained from the head-teacher at each school and an appointment was made well in advance to do the group discussion at a time chosen by the head-teacher. The head-teachers felt that a discussion of approximately 30 minutes was the maximum amount of time that their staff could manage.

The discussions took place during break at School D and after school in the normal staff meeting time at School C. The discussions were held in the quiet and comfortable staff rooms of the two schools. There were no interruptions during the group discussion at School C. At School D the deputy had to leave the discussion for about 10 minutes to deal with a learner.

At the time of the discussion the teachers were thanked for their participation and the nature and aim of the discussion was explained to them. They were encouraged to talk freely to each other and the interviewer about the topics raised. When conversation stalled the interviewer would introduce a new topic or try to prompt the teachers to give more information on the current topic. It was also occasionally necessary for the interviewer to intervene to bring the conversation back to relevant topics. This was done as sensitively as possible, after allowing those participants who were particularly enthusiastic about the topic to have their say. When participants appeared to be finding it difficult to find an opportunity to speak conversation was directed their way. The discussion was concluded when the participants appeared to have little further to say. The participants were thanked and a cake was provided for refreshments. The discussions were recorded on video with the participants' permission.

c) Discussion guide for the focus group discussions

Since the teachers were not adequately prepared to discuss a future programme of parental involvement in their school, the discussion guide was abandoned. This resulted in a unstructured conversation that was directed towards teachers' relationships with, experiences of, beliefs in, and feelings about parents and their involvement.

4.3.5.3 *Individual parent interviews*

Individual interviews of parents were done after they had attended a workshop on parental involvement. During the workshop the importance of parental involvement was explained. Parents were told about and shown ways to help their children by providing an educative atmosphere at home (based on the work of Jantjes 1995:304), by volunteering at the school, and by the use of paired reading and some mathematical techniques that could be used in the home to help children (see Appendix V).

The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain how these parents, who had some understanding of parental involvement, experienced their realities in respect to parental involvement and how they envisaged their role in a future programme of parental involvement in Swaziland.

a) The informants in the parent interviews

The informants were parents who attended the parent workshops held at School C and School D. After the workshop parents were asked to volunteer for the interviews. Three parents from each school were interviewed.

The biographical characteristics of the parents are shown in Table 4.6. Parents' names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Table 4.6 Some characteristics of the six parents interviewed.

Name	School child attends	Gender of parent	Age	Marital status	Family lives together	Level of education	Occupation	Nationality
Mr. Nardu	C	Male	48	Married	Yes	Tertiary	Mechanical engineer	Kenyan
Mr. Kunene	C	Male	37	Married	Yes	Tertiary	Business analyst	Swazi
Ms. Nxumalo	C	Female	60	Married	Yes	Tertiary	Teacher	Swazi
Ms. Dlamini	D	Female	36	Married	Yes	Tertiary	Teacher	Swazi
Mr. Tsabedze	D	Male	43	Married	Yes	Tertiary	Electrician	Swazi
Mr. Razibuhoro	D	Male	43	Married	Yes	Tertiary	Civil engineer	Rwandese

b) The procedure used for the parent interviews

After the workshop it was explained to the parents that by taking part in these interviews they would ensure that their views, feelings and situations were taken into account in the designing of a parental involvement programme for Swaziland. The confidentiality and anonymity of the interviews was also discussed. The parents' names and contact details were recorded. Appointments

at a time and place that suited the parent were then made either immediately or later, telephonically.

Four of the parents were interviewed at their offices. These were generally quiet and comfortable. However, Mr. Razibuhoro's office, which was at a construction site, was noisy. After a while he actually requested his workers to take a break and after that the office was much quieter. Mr. Razibuhoro did not seem to mind doing this, and talked very enthusiastically. He seemed to be in no hurry to end the interview despite being obviously busy.

Ms. Nxumalo was interviewed in quiet, comfortable surroundings at a community center across the road from her home. Ms. Dlamini was interviewed in the researcher's car. This was unavoidable as she was an hour and a half late for the interview and there was no time to drive to a more pleasant venue. The car was air-conditioned and was parked in a relatively private spot so was not uncomfortable as an interview venue. All of the parents were extremely hospitable offering the researcher drinks. Ms. Nxumalo actually came equipped with a tablecloth, plates, cups, tea and home made muffins. Most of the interviews took place mid-morning, although a few took place in the late afternoon.

The purpose of the interview was explained at the start of each interview and permission was requested to record the interviews by video camera. Field notes were also made during the interviews. Biographical questions were asked first, after which the interview guide guided the interview. Parents were thanked for their help after the interview.

c) Interview guide for the parent interviews

The interview guide (see Appendix VI) was constructed along the same principles as the individual teacher interview guide (see 4.3.5.1c). The main differences being that it included a biographical section and that the non-biographical section was less structured than the individual teacher interviews. The guide served only as the most basic outline of questions to be asked and the conversation flowed more naturally and more in accordance with the interviewees' motivation to express themselves. Questions were designed to establish the parents' perspectives on parental involvement and how they could envisage their role in a parental involvement programme.

4.3.5.4 Observation

No interviews or other interactions between people can occur without observation necessarily occurring (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:256). Observation played a minor but nevertheless, essential, role in this study. Observation is particularly useful in exposing discrepancies between what people say and what people actually do (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:422).

Observation was ongoing and spontaneous on the numerous occasions when the researcher was at the school or in the presence of teachers or parents, and during the workshops. These observations were recorded immediately when possible. Otherwise, they were recorded as soon as possible after leaving the school or saying goodbye to the person. A video camera was used to record the workshops.

4.3.6 Recording of data

The interviews were recorded using a video camera since neither an audio recorder nor data transcription machine were available. The video camera had the advantages of excellent sound quality, as well as recording body language and facial expressions. The video recorder was not a distraction as it was simply propped up on a desk and left to record. The little red light on the camera indicated that it was recording. Some of the interviewees were surprised to be recorded but they acceded happily to the use of the machine and most seemed to forget about it rather quickly. Two of the teachers actually asked for a copy of the tape afterwards, which was given to them. The interviewees seemed to be confident about the confidentiality of the interviews, answering questions freely and even volunteering negative comments about their superiors in the work situation.

Field notes of researcher perceptions were also taken during the interviews.

4.3.7 Transcription of data

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and by hand in the informants' own words. There is, however, a danger that transcribed words may lose meaning in terms of tone, volume and emotionality. Further accompanying body language and disposition, which was captured nicely by the video camera, could not be portrayed (van Wyk 1996:164). In order to minimise this loss of expression, notes on these aspects were made in brackets within the transcripts.

4.3.8 Analysis of data

After completing the transcripts, and in fact while doing them and even during the interviews themselves, attempts were made to identify common patterns that seem to preoccupy informants' discussions (Wolcott 1987:46).

Like Wolcott (1994:66) the researcher chose to process the data manually instead of using a software programme to identify, manipulate and code data. Computer programmes are frequently used to manage the huge volume of data qualitative studies produce (Patton 1990:383). This study, involving a total of 18 interviews was still manageable manually. Further, although becoming increasingly rare, manual data processing works (Wolcott 1994:66) and was suited the researcher's desire to be able to see the whole of what she was doing.

A methodical and systematic analysis of the transcripts was attempted. Highlighters were used and copies of the interview transcripts cut up in order to sort them into broad themes. Wolcott (1994:63) states that in his experience categories do not simply emerge from the data on their own. The researcher must actively help them emerge (Wolcott 1994:63). This makes pure description impossible, as even in the most rudimentary sorting some structure must be imposed (Wolcott 1994:63). The themes arose both out of the data and also from the theory on parental involvement. Data segments, which took the form of specific quotations and researcher reflections, were labeled and sorted and re-sorted. These were then grouped together in themes and sub-themes in folders. Constant comparison was used to determine whether the data segments were in the most appropriate category. Data segments were rearranged and categories amended when necessary. Categories which were most appropriate to the study were identified and relationships between them found. Throughout data analysis links between the data and the theory on parental involvement were sought. In order to stay as close to the data as possible each theme heading was

descriptive (Wolcott 1994:63). The themes were interpreted and explained (Smith 2002:2). Most of these processes occurred simultaneously.

The original transcripts and recorded interviews were referred back to continually throughout the analysis in an attempt to ensure that an adequate and accurate picture of parental involvement and the experiences of participants was revealed. This is more likely than when a researcher has to depend on what has been filtered through "head-notes" and field-notes (Wolcott 1994:63).

Van der Mescht (2002:49) points out that researchers frequently report findings from data from different sources separately and that this is not true triangulation. During the data analysis the data from the individual teacher interviews, group interviews, parent interviews, observations and, the quantitative questionnaires was drawn together, in order to reveal the reality of parental involvement in Swaziland (see Chapter 6).

No differentiation was made between data segments drawn from the group discussions and those from the individual teacher interviews during the analysis and presentation of the data. This was because these two types of interviews had essentially the same aim and the participants in both cases were urban Swazi teachers who had similar knowledge of parental involvement (see 4.3.5.2).

Wolcott (1987:50) states that ethnographers necessarily make "whopping" generalisations from rather modest observations of a few cases. He notes that experienced researchers can tell the difference between generalisation and over generalisation. It is hoped that over generalisation was avoided in this study, however generalisations based on a combination of the quantitative and qualitative findings were made. In many cases the qualitative data generated grounded inferences which suggested relationships between variables, these were treated as hypotheses which the quantitative findings either supported or

contradicted. When these hypotheses were supported by the quantitative data they were accepted for the population as a whole. When the quantitative findings contradicted these hypotheses, or there were no relevant quantitative findings, they were only assumed to apply to some, rather than most, teachers or parents.

4.3.9 Presentation of data

Analysed data were presented as readable, narrative descriptions and accompanying interpretations. Thick description (Patton 1990:430), the provision of a sufficient amount of data in the informants own words such that readers would be able to form their own assessment of parental involvement in Swaziland, was used during the reporting of the results. This adds validity and conviction to the results (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:391). Doing this successfully requires both talent and skill and is not easy to achieve (van der Mescht 2002:49). Where possible a balance of quotes was provided so that no participant was either over-quoted or omitted. Contradictory quotes were included whenever possible. General description (Erickson in Winegardner undated:9), in which the reader is told whether the quotes used are typical of the data as a whole and in which the parts are related to the whole, was used. Finally an interpretive commentary provided the framework for understanding the general description and the thick description.

Editing of the interviewees' responses was kept to a minimum although material that was completely irrelevant to parental involvement was removed as well as any "umms" and "ahhs". As the purpose was to show interviewees' perceptions, beliefs, values and meanings of parental involvement, their comments were reported in the original unedited form, even if this was grammatically incorrect or words had been used incorrectly. The researcher felt that changing the words

and correcting the grammar would result in loss of meaning and authenticity. Responses were only edited by adding, subtracting or changing one or two words when they did not make sense as written, and the researcher was absolutely sure what the respondent meant. Interview questions were only reported when they were necessary to understand the interviewees' responses. Only that original data believed to be truly important to illuminating parental involvement was included in the results as researchers are responsible for selecting the most revealing data, interpreting it and getting the message across to the reader (Wolcott 1994:67).

4.3.10 The validity and reliability of the qualitative findings

4.3.10.1 *Introduction*

In qualitative research reliability and validity are assessed in context rather than against an external objective standard (Winegardner undated:9). Although authors generally agree on the criteria for "good" qualitative research, there is no uniformly agreed on definition, or set of criteria, for reliability and validity (Winegardner undated:8). For examples see, Lincoln and Guba (1985:290-331), Patton (1990:460-506), Eisenhart and Howe (1992:657-670), and McMillan and Schumacher (1993:385-397). This may be because there is little distinction between validity and reliability in qualitative research (Winegardner undated:9). As a result what one author may describe as a criterion for reliability is often described as a criterion for validity by another author.

4.3.10.2 *Reliability*

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:385) define reliability as the extent to which another researcher could discover the same phenomenon. Measures to enhance reliability involve a complete description of the research process so that

independent researchers can replicate the same procedures in similar settings (Shimahara in van Wyk 1996:167).

a) Reliability of the design

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:386-388) note several aspects that qualitative researchers must make explicit to enhance the reliability of their design. These criteria for a reliable design were met by this study.

Personal or professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis and interpretation (Patton 1990:472) must be reported. In this study the researcher reported her profession, role and status within the research group, relationship with participants, and the experiences that allowed her to empathise with participants. She acknowledged the centrality of her role and reflected on her biases and values throughout the study (see 4.3.3). Thus the researcher met this criterion for reliability.

The process used to choose participants and the participants themselves were described in sections 4.3.5.1a, 4.3.5.2a and 4.3.5.3a. That the parents in the parent sample were possibly those parents that were more involved in their children's education was noted and taken into account during the analysis of the results. Thus, there was no sampling error and the findings were not distorted (Patton 1990:471).

Social context influences data content. Thus, the time, places, and conditions of the interviews were revealed (see 4.3.5.1b, 4.3.5.2b, and 4.3.5.3b). Detailed descriptions were given of the methods and circumstances of data collection and recording (see 4.3.5 to 4.3.7). The details of data analysis and interpretation were recounted retrospectively (see 4.3.8). Lastly, the conceptual framework, in this case the theory on parental involvement, was made explicit in Chapter 2.

b) Reliability in data collection

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:388) state that what is sought in qualitative research is data collection that results in interobserver reliability. The following criteria for reliable data collection were met in this study.

The data were recorded mechanically through the use of a video camera. This allowed the researcher to collect immediate detailed behaviour and improved accuracy (Spindler & Spindler 1987:21). Verbatim accounts were used extensively throughout Chapter 6 to illustrate participant meanings. This enables others to assess for themselves the credibility of the interpretations and is important for external validity as it makes transferability judgements possible (Lincoln & Guba 1985:316). Low-inference descriptors were used throughout the results section of Chapter 6. Negative cases were actively searched for, analysed, and reported in the results sections of Chapter 6 and their implications for participant meanings were reflected upon. Formal member checking (Lincoln & Guba 1985:314) was not workable in this study due to the reluctance of teachers and parents to be approached repeatedly. This problem was partly overcome by the use of informal immediate member checking (see 4.3.5.1c).

4.3.10.3 Validity

a) Internal validity

Qualitative researchers are usually primarily concerned with internal validity. Internal validity refers to the accuracy and value of the interpretations (Winegardner undated:8). McMillan and Schumacher (1993:391-392) note several criteria for internal validity, which were met in this study.

Data were collected over a period of two years at Schools C and D during which time the researcher made many visits to the schools. This enabled the researcher to have some understanding of the school "culture", establish a degree of trust with teachers, and provided many opportunities for observation, continual data

analysis, comparison and corroboration. This ensured a better match between research themes and participant reality (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:391). Nevertheless, the study would have benefited from the researcher making longer visits to the school. Weeks spent at each school would have improved the validity of the findings by allowing the researcher to observe interactions between parents and teachers. Very little time was spent with parents who the researcher only saw at the workshops and then at the interviews.

Interviews were carried out in the natural work settings of most parents and teachers (see 4.3.5.1b, 4.3.5.2b & 4.3.5.3b), and should thus have reflected the reality of their life experiences more accurately. Finally, the researcher tried to submit all phases of the research process to continuous and rigorous questioning and reevaluation. She tried to identify flaws in her reasoning, biases and misconceptions by frequently referring back to the original interviews.

In addition to meeting these criteria of McMillan and Schumacher, the validity of the study was enhanced further in a number of other ways.

The researcher made use of both methods and data source triangulation (see 4.3.4). Bias from one source or method was offset by the application of another source or method (Adams & van Harmelen 2000:22). Many studies are based on only teachers or parent reports (e.g. Heystek 1999:111; Izzo *et al* 1999:837). Epstein (1986:278) notes that teacher reports only tell one part of the story and that parent reports are also needed for verification and clarification.

The researcher believes that she was able to establish meaningful links between the research, questions, raw data and findings and reconstructed participants reality credibly and authentically (Winegardner undated:8).

Lastly, Eisenhart and Howe (1992:660) note that the research should be valuable for informing or improving educational practice. Since virtually nothing is known about parental involvement in Swaziland and since these findings were used to design a parental involvement programme intended to improve education practice, this criterion was met.

b) External validity

External validity in qualitative research is usually equated with transferability (Lincoln & Guba 1985:316). Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be used to understand similar situations (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:394). This requires precise and detailed descriptions of the participants selected, settings and contexts, and historical effects. This was done in Chapter 4. The findings need also to be contrasted with prior research (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:397). In Chapter 6 the findings of this research were contrasted with those of other research. Thus, it should be possible for other researchers to make transferability judgements based on these findings.

In addition to transferability, generalisations to the wider teacher and parent population were also made from the qualitative data. Although many qualitative researchers reject generalisation (van Wyk 1996:167), Wolcott (1987:50) notes that qualitative research necessarily includes making generalisations. In this study generalisations from the qualitative data were made more acceptable by the fact that most generalisations were tested against the quantitative data or were stated tentatively.

4.3.10.4 *Improvements to the study*

Unfortunately, the study was not as complete and comprehensive, as the researcher would have liked it to be due to the reluctance of parents and teachers to be interviewed repeatedly and at length. Repeated interviews would

have almost certainly captured the informants' realities with more validity (Spindler & Spindler 1992:19). This would have reduced misunderstandings and made participant review possible (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:391). An examination of learners' perceptions and meanings of parental involvement would also have improved the validity of the findings.

4.3.10.5 *Conclusions*

Patton (1990: 472-477) notes that although researchers can use techniques that enhance the quality and validity of their findings, this is not enough to ensure the credibility of the study, which also depends on the creativity, intellectual rigor, perseverance, and insight of the researcher. Qualitative research requires talent and sensitivity (van der Mescht 2002:49). Winegardner (undated:13) notes that experience plays an important role in the success of qualitative research.

The qualitative findings in this study met many conditions for reliability and validity and the researcher fulfilled her obligation (Patton 1993:462) to provide the reader with enough information to judge the validity and reliability of the study.

4.3.11 The validity and reliability of the combined quantitative and qualitative findings

As discussed in 4.1 there is considerable debate over whether quantitative and qualitative findings should or can be reconciled. Shapiro (in Patton 1990:465) discovered conflicts between these two types of data, which she believed resulted from the fact that they were measuring different things. Although conflicts between the qualitative and quantitative data were found (see 6.2.4.1) these were rare and resulted in a deeper understanding of parental involvement. On the whole the quantitative and qualitative data were remarkably consistent.

The quantitative data supported many of the hypotheses that arose from the qualitative data. Further, the qualitative findings provided depth and understanding to the quantitative results. Triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative findings was one of the greatest strengths of this study.

4.3.12 Research ethics

Murray (2002:1) outlines three major ethical values that should be respected in research, respect for persons, respect for truth and respect for democratic values.

Respect for the informants in this study was shown by addressing them in respectful language at all times, dressing respectfully, asking permission to use the video camera, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and informing participants of the nature and purpose of the study and their own role in it.

Respect for truth was shown by working honestly, systematically and analytically in such a way that it would be clear to other researchers how the conclusions evolved from the raw data.

Finally, Murray (2002:2) notes that as part of a democratic society, researchers can expect certain freedoms as long as they accept their responsibilities in terms of respect for people and the truth. These are the freedom to publish, ask questions, criticise others and so forth.

An ethical dilemma, arose in this study from the insistence of some teachers to be interviewed at times when they were meant to be in the classroom. Mr. Nkunita, Ms. Malaza and Ms. Dube left their learners doing revision and Mr. Fakudze and Mr. Nyoni allowed their learners to play outside the class during the

interviews. Fortunately, the interviews were short and kept teachers out of their classrooms for no more than 30 minutes.

4.4 Summary

Although the researcher essentially follows the positivist paradigm she also attempted to don the “paradigmatic spectacles” of interpretive paradigm and combine both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in this study. The combination of these two approaches is difficult and is objected to by both quantitative and qualitative purists. However, it has been done and is recommended by some authors when, as in this study, a more complete understanding of a phenomenon is sought.

The quantitative research was based on a self-rating parental questionnaire, which was designed to measure the two determinants of parental involvement (see 2.6) and had been adapted from a South African study for the Swazi situation. This questionnaire was used to measure the responses of 218 parents of urban Swazi Grade 5 learners. A number of hypotheses, based on the literature review, about the involvement of various groups of parents in their children’s education were tested statistically using t-tests, F-tests and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. In addition, the percentage of parents involved in certain activities was calculated. The quantitative research had the advantage of providing generalisable results, which were important for the design of a parental involvement programme in senior primary education in Swaziland.

The qualitative, descriptive research following an ethnographic approach was used to provide depth, detail and a more complete picture of parental involvement in Swaziland. Since the researcher is the primary instrument of data

collection, researcher' characteristics that may have affected data collection were described. The researcher's primary strategy of data collection was interviews. Semi-structured and unstructured individual teacher interviews and focus group discussions were done in order to establish teachers' beliefs, feelings, meanings and experiences of parental involvement. Parent interviews were done to explore how parents experienced their realities in respect to parental involvement and how they envisaged a future programme of parental involvement in Swaziland. The interviews were supported by observations. Interviews were recorded by video camera and transcribed verbatim. Data segments were sorted manually into themes that arose both from the data and the literature. Data were presented as thick description in the original words of the participants.

Both qualitative triangulation and triangulation through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research was done to increase the validity of the study. The qualitative and quantitative findings were drawn together to provide a more complete, detailed picture of parental involvement in Swaziland. Grounded inferences that arose from the qualitative data were treated as hypotheses, which the quantitative findings either supported or contradicted.

Ethical considerations as well as considerations of validity and reliability were borne in mind throughout the study.

In Chapter 5 the results of the quantitative part of the study are revealed and discussed. In Chapter 6 the results of the qualitative part of the study are narrated and an attempt is made to draw the quantitative and qualitative results together to reveal a coherent detailed picture of parental involvement in Swaziland.

Chapter 5

Quantitative findings and discussion

"In every school, regardless of its location and population served, a parent involvement component is important in fostering children's school success"
(U.S Department of Education in Miedel & Reynolds 1999:399).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a factor analysis done to confirm the construct validity of the parental questionnaire. Thereafter the reliability of the measuring instrument, tested by item analysis, is demonstrated. Further, the findings of the t-tests, the F-tests, or the Pearson Product Moment Correlation used to test each of the hypotheses described in 4.2.2, are revealed and discussed. Lastly the percentage of parents who gave each of the scaled responses to the items in the questionnaire is presented and discussed.

5.2 Factor analysis

5.2.1 Introduction

Factor analysis was done to determine the construct validity of the questionnaire. The items in Sections A, B and C of the parental questionnaire (see 4.2.6) were subjected to factor analysis using principal component analysis with iterations to determine whether the items in a particular section measured the same construct. Three factors were sought, since the questionnaire was originally divided into three sections, parental attitude to the school, parent initiated contact and school initiated contact. The three factors from the factor analysis were then rotated using a Varimax rotation, which is an orthogonal rotation method. Table 5.1 reveals the rotated factor pattern as well as the final communality estimates of the 54 items.

Factors were interpreted by studying the nature of the items that had significant loadings on each factor. A loading of 0.3 or higher can be considered significant if the sample is larger than 50 subjects (Child 1976: 45). In the present investigation, the sample was 218, thus, 0.3 is the criterion for a significant loading. If an item

showed a significant loading onto more than one factor, it was usually grouped into the factor with the highest loading.

Table 5.1 Rotated factor pattern and communality estimates

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Communality estimates
50	0.678	0.054	0.088	0.470
52	0.653	-0.014	0.030	0.427
48	0.653	0.081	0.229	0.485
49	0.596	0.014	0.060	0.359
47	0.585	0.140	0.310	0.458
53	0.577	0.127	0.206	0.392
51	0.576	-0.051	0.041	0.336
54	0.525	0.170	0.191	0.342
40	0.487	0.134	0.358	0.383
39	0.481	0.191	0.351	0.391
46	0.481	-0.056	0.068	0.239
45	0.423	0.164	0.248	0.267
43	0.420	0.174	0.169	0.235
41	0.404	-0.040	0.165	0.192
38	0.397	0.067	0.371	0.299
44	0.395	0.068	0.181	0.194
33	0.392	0.137	-0.067	0.177
32	0.384	0.200	-0.086	0.195
30	0.332	0.388	-0.081	0.268
29	0.330	0.248	-0.069	0.175
31	0.327	0.320	-0.081	0.216
42	0.260	0.203	0.219	0.157
21	0.044	0.697	0.018	0.489
20	0.038	0.666	-0.018	0.446
19	0.135	0.629	0.054	0.417
24	0.105	0.589	-0.009	0.359
36	0.107	0.580	0.154	0.371
23	0.135	0.570	0.119	0.358
18	0.191	0.540	0.035	0.330
16	0.028	0.519	-0.103	0.281
26	-0.029	0.504	0.110	0.267
22	0.072	0.467	0.113	0.236
25	-0.040	0.449	0.028	0.204
9	-0.065	0.409	0.168	0.200
35	0.061	0.403	0.071	0.171
8	-0.041	0.381	0.270	0.220
34	0.316	0.347	-0.041	0.222
28	0.233	0.339	0.156	0.193
27	0.028	0.326	0.010	0.107

17	0.185	0.287	0.126	0.133
2	0.087	0.110	0.711	0.525
13	0.144	-0.006	0.677	0.480
11	0.166	0.036	0.612	0.403
7	0.147	0.164	0.605	0.414
5	0.110	-0.054	0.599	0.374
15	0.326	0.063	0.568	0.433
14	0.412	-0.124	0.510	0.446
1	0.448	0.334	0.491	0.554
37	0.334	0.084	0.481	0.350
3	0.113	0.273	0.479	0.317
6	0.262	0.147	0.375	0.231
12	0.157	0.057	0.297	0.116
4	-0.172	0.042	0.283	0.112
10	-0.113	0.013	0.185	0.047

The vast majority of the items had significant loadings on the sections to which they were originally assigned (see Appendix II). Thus, most of the items remained in their original group.

5.2.2 The assignment of suitable names to the three factors

5.2.2.1 *Assignment of a name to Factor 1*

The factor analysis grouped the majority of items in Section C into Factor 1 (see Table 5.1). In Sitole's questionnaire (Sitole1993:86), Section C, which corresponds roughly to Section C of this questionnaire (see 4.2.6.2), was named, "school initiated contact". Factor 1 has been re-named by the researcher, "**school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)**".

This name emphasizes that the items in this section measured the parents' perceptions of the school's, and the teachers', efforts to initiate parental involvement activities. For example, Item 52 "The school asks me to help make decisions on how school funds are spent". Some of these items, like Item 52, gave parents an opportunity to be involved in their children's education that they would

not have without the schools cooperation. Other items encouraged parents to be involved in ways that they could be involved even without the schools cooperation. For example, Item 39, "The school asks me to check my child's homework".

"Parental involvement" rather than "contact" was used as each item referred to a specific parental involvement activity, according to the definition in 2.2, rather than merely a way or form in which the school contacted the parents. For example, Item 48, "The school asks me to help make decisions about what and how my child is taught". In this item, the emphasis is not on the way the school contacts the parents, which could be any number of means including newsletters, questionnaires, or meetings. Rather the emphasis is on the involvement activity performed by the parent, namely, contributing to decisions on curriculum and teaching methods.

Item 42 (see Table 5.1) was included in Factor 1 since it loaded at the significance level for this factor (approximated to one decimal place) and it did not load significantly onto any other factor.

5.2.2.2 Assignment of a name to Factor 2

The factor analysis grouped the majority of items in Section B of the questionnaire into Factor 2 (see Table 5.1). In Sitole's questionnaire (Sitole 1986:86), Section B, which corresponds roughly to Section B of this questionnaire (see 4.2.6.2), was named, "parent initiated contact". Factor 2 has been re-named by the researcher, "**parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)**".

Factor analysis reassigned several items from this section to the other sections. The name "**parent initiated parental involvement**" was chosen as the items that remained in this section measured the degree to which parents were involved in activities that they could decide to be involved in regardless of whether the school

invited them to be involved or not. For example, Item 18, "I read to my child". Although the school may request or encourage parents to read to their children, which may result in greater parental involvement, parents could be involved in this way even if the school did not ask them to be. These items reflected the extent to which parents actually were involved in ways that they could initiate. For many of these parent initiated involvement activities no contact with the school was necessary. Thus "involvement" rather than "contact" was used to name this factor.

Item 17 (see Table 5.1) was included in this factor since it loaded at the significance level (approximated to one decimal place) and did not load significantly onto any other factor.

5.2.2.3 *Assignment of a name to Factor 3*

The factor analysis grouped the majority of the items in Section A of the questionnaire into Factor 3 (see Table 5.1). In Sitole's questionnaire (Sitole 1993:86), Section A, which corresponds roughly to Section A of this questionnaire (see 4.2.6.2), was named, "parents' attitude to the school". Factor 3 retained the name, "**parental attitude to the school (PAS)**" because most of the items that loaded significantly onto this factor reflected clearly the parent's attitude to the school. For example, Item 1, "This is a very good school".

However, two of the items, items 4 and 12, do not reflect clearly the parents' attitude to the school. Item 4, "My child should get more homework", suggests that the parents take their children's education seriously; it does not however, necessarily reflect a positive attitude to the school. Item 12, "Parents get involved more in the lower grades" also does not clearly reflect the parents' attitude to the school. However, Items 4 and 12 were not omitted from the questionnaire, as they loaded positively onto Factor 3, at the 0.3 significance level (approximated to one

decimal place) and because this was already quite a short section of the questionnaire containing a final total of 13 items. Item 10 was discarded from the questionnaire, as it was not significant for any of the three factors.

5.2.2.4 Items that did not load onto the categories for which they were developed

There were a number of items that loaded significantly, often with high loadings onto factors that did not correspond to the original categories for which they were developed. These items are shown in Table 5.2, below. For the remainder of the study the distribution of the items according to the factor analysis was accepted (see Tables 5.3, 5.4 & 5.5) and the original allocation of items was ignored.

Table 5.2. Items which changed section

		Categories for which the items were developed		
		SIPI	PIPI	PAS
Factors on which the items showed significant loadings	SIPI		29, 30, 31, 32, 33	
	PIPI			8, 9
	PAS	37		

Items 29, 31, 32 and 33 were originally assigned to Factor 2 (PIPI) but they all loaded significantly, and most highly, onto Factor 1 (SIPI). "Item 29 was I go to PTA/PTO meetings". "Item 31 was I go to plays, musicals or other social or cultural events at the school". "Item 32 was I go to parent-teacher evenings or meetings". Item 33 was "I do fundraising for the school". These activities and events are traditionally initiated and organised by schools in Swaziland and parents could not attend them unless these events were made available by the school. Thus, parent attendance at these events was largely as a result of school initiated involvement and these items were included in SIPI for the remainder of the study. For this reason Item 30, "I go to sports events at the school", was also reassigned to the section SIPI even though it also loaded significantly onto PIPI.

Items 8 and 9 showed highest loadings onto Factor 2 (PIPI) rather than onto Factor 3 (PAS) to which they were originally assigned. Item 8 was "I feel I can help my child in reading". Item 9 was "I feel I can help my child in mathematics". It seems probable that these items loaded most highly into parent initiated parental involvement, as parents who decide that they can help their children with mathematics or reading are far more likely to actually initiate these activities than those that feel they can't help (see 2.7.2.6). These two items were assigned to PIPI for the remainder of the study.

Item 37 showed a highest loading onto Factor 3 (PAS) rather than Factor 1 (SIPI) for which it was originally developed, although it showed a significant loading on both factors. Item 37 was "The school tells me how my child is doing at school". The higher loading onto PASI makes sense as this item reflects the parents' attitude to the school. One would expect parents to have a positive attitude to a school that provides information on how the child is doing and to have a negative attitude to a school that does not provide information on how their child is doing.

5.2.2.5 *Summary*

Several items were reallocated to different factors after the factor analysis. For the remainder of this study this new distribution of items was accepted. Each factor was named according to the aspect of parental involvement that the items included in it measured.

The items in Factor 1 measured the parents' perceptions of the school's, and the teachers', efforts to initiate parental involvement activities. Consequently Factor 1 was named **school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)**. Thus, this section of the questionnaire measured a determinant of parental involvement defined in 2.6, the school's efforts to involve parents.

The items in Factor 2 measured the extent to which parents took the opportunities they had to be involved in activities that they could initiate with or without the school's cooperation. Thus, Factor 2 was named **parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)**. This differs from the second determinant of parental involvement, which includes, in addition, the extent to which parents take the opportunities provided by the school to become involved (see 2.6). Thus, PIPI provides a measure of parental involvement in activities that did not depend on the school for their existence.

The items in Factor 3 measured the parents' attitude to the school. Hence, Factor 3 was named **parental attitude to the school (PAS)**. Although not a determinant of parental involvement as defined in 2.6, the parents' attitude to the school does affect the degree to which parents become involved in their children's education (see 2.7.2.7).

5.3. Item analysis

An item analysis was done for each of the three newly developed sections of the questionnaire to establish whether each item made a positive contribution to the total of that section of the questionnaire (Schnel 2001:105).

In order to determine whether to omit or retain an item, two procedures were followed. Firstly, item-total correlations were calculated and the item was omitted if the item-total correlation was very low or negative (Schnel 2001: 105). Secondly, an Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated for each section of the questionnaire, in the event that all items were retained. The Alpha reliability coefficient was also calculated when a specific item was left out. An item was omitted if doing so resulted in a significantly higher Alpha reliability coefficient. Thus, on the basis of

the item-total correlation, and the Alpha reliability coefficient one can decide whether a specific item should be retained or left out (Schnel 2001:106).

The findings of the item analysis for each section are shown in Tables 5.3 to 5.5.

Table 5.3. Item analysis of the section, school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)

No. of subjects: 218 No of items:22 Alpha reliability coefficient: 0.876		
Item	Item correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
50	0.598	0.867
52	0.566	0.868
48	0.635	0.865
49	0.523	0.870
47	0.612	0.866
53	0.592	0.867
51	0.474	0.871
54	0.539	0.869
40	0.522	0.869
39	0.554	0.868
46	0.445	0.872
45	0.479	0.871
43	0.469	0.871
41	0.384	0.874
38	0.430	0.872
44	0.456	0.871
33	0.366	0.875
32	0.349	0.875
30	0.344	0.875
29	0.334	0.875
31	0.315	0.876
42	0.324	0.875

In the school initiated parental involvement section there were no items that correlated negatively with the total and omitting any of the items would not have increased the alpha reliability coefficient significantly. Therefore all items were retained.

Table 5.4. Item analysis of the section, parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)

No. of subjects : 218		
No. of items : 18		
Alpha reliability coefficient: 0.850		
Item	Item correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
21	0.607	0.836
20	0.597	0.838
19	0.590	0.836
24	0.542	0.838
36	0.557	0.837
23	0.554	0.838
18	0.515	0.839
16	0.459	0.845
26	0.475	0.841
22	0.453	0.842
25	0.389	0.846
9	0.372	0.846
35	0.379	0.845
8	0.354	0.846
34	0.362	0.847
28	0.356	0.848
27	0.299	0.848
17	0.324	0.848

In the section, parent initiated parental involvement, there were also no items that correlated negatively with the total. Further, omitting any of the items would not have increased the alpha reliability coefficient significantly. Thus, all the items were retained.

Table 5.5 Item analysis of the section, parental attitude to the school (PAS)

No. Of subjects: 218 No. of items : 13 Alpha reliability coefficient: 0.835		
Item	Item correlation with total	Alpha if item is left out
1	0.663	0.817
2	0.674	0.815
13	0.664	0.811
11	0.552	0.819
7	0.596	0.816
5	0.542	0.820
15	0.549	0.819
14	0.522	0.822
37	0.460	0.825
3	0.465	0.825
6	0.430	0.827
12	0.320	0.836
4	0.209	0.840

In the parental attitude to the school section, there were also no items that correlated negatively with the total. Omitting any of the items would not have increased the reliability significantly. Thus, all of the items in this section were retained.

In conclusion, the results of the item analysis suggested that the parental questionnaire was a reliable tool for measuring parental attitude to the school, parent initiated parental involvement, and school initiated parental involvement. The distribution of items shown in Table 5.3 to 5.5 reflects the final classification of the items used for the remainder of the study.

5.4 The reliability and validity of the parental questionnaire

The items were grouped into three constructs. This grouping of the items was confirmed by factor analysis (see 5.2) and thus the parental questionnaire had construct validity. The content validity of the measuring instrument was also established (see 4.2.6.2).

The closer the reliability of a measuring instrument is to 1, the smaller the difference is between the variance of the actual score and the observed score (Pienaar 1994:78). Ideally when an instrument is developed, its reliability should be as close to 1 as possible (Pienaar 1994:78).

It was not possible to test the reliability of the instrument using the test-retest method by administering it twice to the sample group. This was because, the parents would have been far less likely to complete it a second time and retesting would have influenced the spontaneous responses of the respondents. The equivalent form method could not be used, as there was no equivalent form available (Pienaar 1994: 78). Reliability was, therefore, established by calculating the alpha reliability coefficient for each section (see Table 5.3 to 5.5). The reliability coefficients are presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Reliability of the parental questionnaire

Section	Alpha Coefficient	No. of items
SIPI	0.876	22
PIPI	0.850	18
PAS	0.835	13

Table 5.6 indicates that the reliability coefficient for each section was high. Therefore, the parental questionnaire could be considered a reliable measuring instrument.

5.5 Testing of the hypotheses

F- and t-tests were used to test hypotheses 1-5 and 8-10 (stated in 4.2.2) for each of the 3 variables, **school initiated parental involvement**, **parent initiated parental involvement**, and **parental attitude to the school**. In addition, the Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to test the relationship between each of these three parental involvement variables and mathematics and English achievement, hypotheses 6 and 7.

Although SIPI refers to the school and teachers efforts to initiate parental involvement, it must be remembered that the questionnaire measured the parents' perceptions of the school's efforts in this regard rather than the actual efforts of the school. Nevertheless, since parents had no reason to bias their remarks in order to present a more favourable image of the school, SIPI is likely to give an accurate measure of the school and teachers efforts to initiate parental involvement.

5.5.1 Hypothesis 1

With regard to hypothesis 1 stated in 4.2.2.1, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents of different socioeconomic status.
- The hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The socioeconomic status of the respondents was divided into three groups on the basis of their annual income.

Group 1: Less than E18 000 (n = 58).

Group 2: E18 000 – E52 000 (n = 88).

Group 3: More than E52 000 (n = 59).

The F-test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the average parental involvement of the parents in the three different income groups for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5.

5.5.1.1 *Comparison between parents of the three different income groups with regard to **school initiated parental involvement***

The average **school initiated parental involvement** for each of the three income groups was calculated and compared. The findings are shown in Table 5.7

Table 5.7. Comparison of the SIPI of the different parental income groups

Income group	N	Mean SIPI	SD
1	58	47.707	13.190
2	88	48.000	12.088
3	59	46.288	10.152
F (2,202) = 0.39 ; P>0.05			

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of the three parental income groups (see Table 5.7). This result is in accordance with those of Hickman *et al* (1995:129) and Shaver and Walls (1998:94) who also found no significant relationship between parental SES and parental involvement generally.

This finding suggests that these Swazi teachers and schools did not discriminate against parents according to their income level but rather made equal efforts to involve parents of all income groups. Apparently Swazi teachers did not make the stereotypic judgements against parents of lower SES that some teachers have been found to make in other studies (Epstein & Dauber 1991:290). This may be because the majority of teachers and the parents came from the same, Swazi, racial-ethnic community, regardless of SES (see 4.2.4.1). Alternatively, this may have been because teachers were unable to identify the SES of parents because low SES is not linked with any particular race or ethnic group in this community. In foreign countries parents with lower SES can often easily be identified by their race since SES is often closely linked with race-ethnicity (Lynch & Mills 1993:66; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp 1996:23; Placier1996:246).

5.5.1.2 *Comparison between parents of the three different income groups with regard to **parent initiated parental involvement***

The average **parent initiated parental involvement** for each of the three parent income groups was calculated and compared. The results are shown in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Comparison of the PIPI of the different parental income groups

Income group	n	Mean PIPI	SD
1	58	56.845	10.874
2	88	60.386	7.430
3	59	59.763	8.345

F (2, 202) = 3.01; p>0.05

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** of the three income groups (see Table 5.8). This finding indicated that parents, regardless of income level, were generally involved at similar levels in activities that they could initiate. Again, this finding is in accordance with the work of Hickman *et al* (1995:129), and Shaver and Walls (1998:94). Thus,

factors proposed by various authors to explain the lower levels of involvement of parents of lower SES were not lowering involvement in this community (see 2.7.2.1). Certainly, the argument that parents of lower SES may feel distanced and alienated from culturally different middle-class schools (Weiss & Edwards 1992:216) does not operate in this Swazi urban community. The majority of teachers and parents came from the same cultural-ethnic group (see 4.2.4.1). Further, there is very little cultural stratification in the Swazi population in accordance with income groups (personal observation).

Nevertheless, one may expect parents of lower SES to be under increased pressure due to financial constraints (Davies 1991:381), and to have extra barriers to their involvement such as less flexible work hours (Heymann & Earle 2000:842). However, the fact that parents in the lowest income group earned less than E1500 per month, did not seem to have a negative impact on the extent to which they became involved in their children's education in this community.

It is possible, however, that even though Swazi parents of different income levels were involved generally to the same degree in their children's education, that they may have been involved to different degrees in different types of parental involvement activities as was found by Hickman *et al* (1995:129). This possibility should be investigated in future studies. Many other authors have shown differences in the degree of involvement between parents of different SES and some types of parental involvement (see 2.7.2.1).

5.5.1.3 *Comparison between parents of the three different income groups with regard to **parental attitude to the school**.*

The average **parental attitude to the school** for each of the three parent income groups was calculated and compared. The findings are shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Comparison of the PAS of the different parental income groups

Group	n	Mean PAS	SD
1	58	45.931	7.825
2	88	45.784	6.012
3	59	43.695	6.859

F (2,202) = 2.10; p > 0.05

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the average **parental attitude to the school** of the three parent income groups (see Table 5.9). This finding supports the proposal that parents in this community did not feel alienated or distanced from the schools as the result of having a low SES. This may have been because the school was not significantly culturally different from these parents and because teachers did not discriminate against them as was suggested by the finding that parent SES had no significant relationship with SIPI (see 5.5.1.1).

5.5.2 Hypothesis 2

With regard to hypothesis 2 stated in section 4.2.2.2, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents with different levels of education.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

Less than 4% of the parents had no formal education or only primary education. As a result only two groups of parents were considered, those who had completed secondary education and those who had completed tertiary education.

Group 1: Parents who had completed their secondary education, i.e. high school (n = 55).

Group 2: Parents who had completed their tertiary education, i.e. obtained either a college diploma or university degree (n=149).

The means of both education groups were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The findings are presented in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of parents with secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Variable	Level of education	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	Secondary	55	50.036	11.625	1.63	202	p > 0.05
	Tertiary	149	46.960	12.106			
PIPI	Secondary	55	58.909	10.896	0.46	202	p > 0.05
	Tertiary	149	59.564	8.219			
PAS	Secondary	55	47.800	5.895	2.88	202	P < 0.01
	Tertiary	149	44.779	6.896			

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the mean scores of parents who completed secondary education and those who completed tertiary education for both **school initiated parental involvement**, and **parent initiated parental involvement** (see Table 5.10). This indicated that, in general, parents who completed secondary education and those that completed tertiary education did not differ significantly with regard to either parent or school initiated parental involvement. These findings are in accordance with those of Sitole (1993:138) who found that parents of underachieving children who had completed primary, secondary, or tertiary education did not differ with respect to either involvement initiated by the school or the parent.

Swazi teachers did not appear to discriminate, in terms of how much they attempted to involve parents, between parents who had completed secondary education and those who had completed tertiary education. It is possible, however, that some Swazi teachers make less effort to involve the tiny fraction of less educated parents. Some teachers in the USA do not make the effort to involve parents that have less than a high school education because, they claim, these parents lack the ability or willingness to help (Epstein 1987a:131).

Parents with secondary and those with tertiary education also did not differ significantly in the degree to which they were involved in their children's education in activities that they could initiate. This finding is not unexpected since one would intuitively expect both secondary and tertiary educated parents to have sufficient skills, and feel confident, to help their primary school children.

Parental illiteracy was identified by South African educators in several studies (see 3.4.4.1) to be the biggest barrier to parental involvement. However, in this study because a tiny fraction of parents (less than 3%) had only a primary education, while less than 1% had had no formal education, this portion of the sample was excluded from the analysis. Thus, it was not possible to tell whether illiterate Swazi parents were less involved in their children's education. Regardless, it was clear that very few parents of these urban Swazi primary learners, unlike those in urban Soweto schools (Mkwanazi 1997:27), were likely to be illiterate. This finding is in accordance with the fact that 4 out of 5 of these schools were located in Manzini, which has the highest literacy rate for the country (IE 1994:1). Consequently, illiteracy is not likely to form a barrier to parental involvement for the vast majority of Swazi urban parents particularly those living in Manzini. However, since approximately one third of the Swazi population as a whole is illiterate (IE 1994:32) it would be necessary for future studies to investigate the relationship between parental illiteracy and parent involvement. The findings of such studies are likely to

be particularly pertinent in rural communities where the majority of illiterate adults reside (IE 1994:2).

There was, however, a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in the average **attitude of parents to the school** of parents who completed secondary education and those who completed tertiary education (see Table 5.10). Parents who completed secondary education appeared to have a more positive attitude to the school than those who completed tertiary education. This finding is contrary to that of Sitole (1993:138) who found no difference.

Since Swazi schools reflect Swazi culture generally (see 4.2.4.1), this more positive parental attitude of the secondary level educated parents was not likely to be because these parents felt more comfortable culturally at the school. Parents with tertiary education were likely to feel equally comfortable at the school. McGillicuddy-Delisi (in Watkins 1997:4) proposed that less educated parents may be more likely than other parents to understand the importance of parental involvement. However, if this were the case one would expect this more positive attitude to translate into more involvement by these parents. The levels of PIPI did not differ significantly for these two groups. The fact that the SIPI did not differ significantly for the two groups suggests that the teachers and school were not discriminating between the groups in favour of the less educated parents. One possible explanation for this more positive attitude is that these less educated parents may have had lower expectations of the school and thus, had a more positive attitude to its efforts and achievements.

5.5.3 Hypothesis 3

With regard to hypothesis 3 stated in section 4.2.2.3, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents who speak different home languages.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

Since more than 93% of the sample population spoke either siSwati or English, only the responses of parents speaking these two languages were analysed.

Group 1: Parents whose home language was siSwati (n = 180).

Group 2: Parents whose home language was English (n = 23).

The means of both language groups were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The results are presented in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of siSwati- and English-speaking parents.

Variable	Language	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	siSwati	180	47.528	11.794	0.80	201	p> 0.05
	English	23	49.696	15.019			
PIPI	siSwati	180	58.750	9.056	1.42	201	p> 0.05
	English	23	61.609	9.321			
PAS	siSwati	180	45.661	6.657	0.65	201	p> 0.05
	English	23	44.696	7.138			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of siSwati and English-speaking parents with regard to **school initiated parental involvement, parent initiated parental involvement, or parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.11). This indicates that, in general, siSwati-speaking and English-speaking parents did not differ significantly with regard to parental involvement as measured by this instrument.

These schools taught and communicated with learners and their parents in English (see 4.2.4.1). The findings suggested that the fact that siSwati-speaking parents spoke a different language from that used by the school did not form a barrier to their involvement. This finding is not unexpected since the majority of parents were well educated (see 5.5.2) and a pass in English is required for the completion of O'Levels (the exams that conclude secondary education) (SASB 1996:124). Thus, one would expect most siSwati-speaking parents to be able to communicate effectively in English. Further, despite the fact that these schools used English as the medium of instruction and communication, the home language of most teachers was siSwati and siSwati speaking parents and teachers had the same ethnic-cultural background (see 4.2.4.1). Consequently, cultural differences would not create barriers for the involvement of these siSwati-speaking parents.

Since speaking siSwati is an integral part of Swazi culture, the English-speaking parents can be assumed to have a different cultural background from the schools and the majority of teachers. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that teachers made similar efforts to involve all parents and that this cultural difference did not present a barrier to the involvement of English-speaking parents. The fact that these parents could communicate easily with teachers and were not socioeconomically disadvantaged (personal observation) probably explained this finding. Kerbow and Berhardt (in Zellman and Waterman 1998:371) found that minority parents are often more involved than non-minority parents when SES is equal. Scott-Jones (1987:273) points out that adequate SES control is extremely difficult to obtain, so that even when attempts are made to control SES, differences in involvement may sometimes be erroneously ascribed to race-ethnicity when they are, in fact, due to SES.

It is however, possible that parents from these different language-ethnic groups were involved in different ways in their children's education and that the effectiveness of parental involvement activities may differ according to the race-ethnicity of the parents and children as has been found in foreign studies (see 2.7.2.2).

Since the hypothesis was not tested for the tiny proportion of parents, less than 7%, who spoke languages other than English and siSwati at home. It is possible that the different home languages of these parents, to that used by these schools, may have been barriers to their involvement.

5.5.4 Hypothesis 4

With regard to hypothesis 4 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.4, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of employed and unemployed parents.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The parents were in one of two groups.

Group 1: Unemployed parents (n = 26).

Group 2: Employed parents (n =192).

The means of the employed and unemployed parents were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The findings are presented in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of employed and unemployed parents.

Variable	Employment status	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	Employed	192	47.135	11.935	1.56	216	p>0.05
	Unemployed	26	51.038	12.350			
PIPI	Employed	192	58.958	8.884	0.53	216	p>0.05
	Unemployed	26	59.962	9.739			
PAS	Employed	192	45.151	6.941	1.45	216	p>0.05
	Unemployed	26	47.192	5.020			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of employed and unemployed parents with regard to **school initiated parental involvement**, **parent initiated parental involvement**, or **parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.12). This indicated that, in general, employed and unemployed parents did not differ significantly with regard to parental involvement as measured by this instrument.

Unemployment has been identified as one of the biggest barriers to parental involvement in several South African studies (see 3.4.4.1). Further, parents who work full-time may actually be more involved in home involvement activities than those who do not (see 2.7.2.3). The findings of this study suggest, however, that there is no relationship between employment and parental involvement. However, the statistical analysis was based on the work status of only the parent who answered the questionnaire. Thus, it is possible that the other parent in these families was working. These families may have been sufficiently well-off economically that the second parent did not need to work. Thus, the stresses believed to prevent unemployed parents from being more involved in their children's education (van Wyk 2001:126) may not have been operating in these families. Thus, no conclusion can be reached about the effect of unemployment on parental involvement in this community except that the unemployment of one parent seemed to have no significant effect on parental involvement, and that the majority of responding parents (over 88%) were employed. In only 12% of these families was either one or both parents unemployed. One would expect a substantial proportion of these families to have had at least one parent employed. Thus, unemployment of both parents is probably very rare in this community and as a result is not likely to be a barrier to involvement for the majority of parents whose children attend urban Swazi primary schools.

5.5.5 Hypothesis 5

With regard to hypothesis 5 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.5, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of single and married parents.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

Due to the very low numbers of divorced and remarried respondents, the subjects were divided into two groups.

Group 1: Married parents, which included remarried parents (n = 157).

Group 2: Unmarried parents, which included single and divorced parents (n = 55).

The means of both groups were calculated and compared for each of the measures of parental involvement (see 5.2.2.5). The findings are presented in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of married and single parents.

Variable.	Marital status	n	Mean	SD	T	df	P
SIPI	Married	157	47.108	11.763	0.93	210	p> 0.05
	Unmarried	55	48.873	12.962			
PIPI	Married	157	58.739	8.7904	0.51	210	p> 0.05
	Unmarried	55	59.455	9.7084			
PAS	Married	157	44.975	6.9282	1.44	210	p> 0.05
	Unmarried	55	46.509	6.333			



There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of married and unmarried parents with regard to **school initiated parental involvement**, **parent initiated parental involvement**, or **parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.13). This indicates that, in general, married and unmarried urban Swazi parents do not differ significantly with regard to parental involvement.

These results suggest that single Swazi parents initiated as much involvement in their children's education as married parents and that Swazi educators were not biased against single parents, in terms of involving them in their children's education. This despite the fact that some negative bias remains against single parents in many societies (Scott-Jones 1987:271). Sitole (1993:122) also observed no differences between parent and school initiated involvement of single and married parents. However he found that married parents had a more positive attitude to the school.

Many researchers have found lower levels of involvement in single-parent families, especially in terms of involvement at the school (see 2.7.2.4). Grolnick *et al* (1997:546) found lower levels of parental involvement for single parents for all three dimensions of parental involvement that they studied, personal, cognitive and school. However, when SES was held constant only school involvement differed (Grolnick *et al* 1997:546). This suggests that it was the low SES of these families rather than the family structure that reduced involvement in the other dimensions. Evidence of other studies also suggests that lower SES may explain many of the negative effects of single-parenthood on children (Scott-Jones 1987:272). Since SES had no effect on parental involvement in this study, the finding that marital status has no effect on parental involvement is not surprising. It is possible, however, that single-parents were less involved in some types of parental involvement, such as involvement at the school, as has been found in several other studies.

5.5.6 Hypothesis 6

With regard to hypothesis 6 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.6, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant positive correlation between **school initiated parental involvement** and learners' achievement in mathematics.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

To test this hypothesis the second term mathematics marks of 218 learners were used. The Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to ascertain if a significant positive correlation existed. The findings of the test are recorded in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14. Correlation between parental involvement and learners' mathematics achievement

	SIPI	PIPI	PAS
Mathematics achievement	-0.051	0.041	0.107
$p > 0.05$ for all correlations			

No significant relationship ($p > 0.05$) was found between any of the three measures of parental involvement and children's mathematics achievement (see Table 5.14).

Many authors have found a correlation between academic achievement and parental involvement and believe that parental involvement improves academic achievement (see 2.4). On the other hand, Ma's (1999:78) suggests that, through academic excellence or taking an advanced course, the child may initiate at least some types of parental involvement. In either case a correlation between academic excellence and parental involvement would be expected. These results, however, support neither proposal.

Parent initiated parental involvement had no relationship with mathematics grade in this study despite the fact that the teacher's felt mathematics achievement was a good indication of general achievement and that learner grades have been found to be particularly sensitive to parental involvement (see 4.2.2.6). It is possible that a relationship would have been found, however, had a different measure of academic achievement been used. It is also possible that some types of involvement in Epstein's (1995:704) six areas may have had a relationship with mathematics achievement, even though the general level of parent and teacher initiated involvement did not. Many studies have found a relationship between academic achievement and only some types of parental involvement rather than with parental involvement generally (see 2.4).

Teachers in this study did not make more effort to involve the parents of either high or low achievers in mathematics. This is surprising as one would expect the teachers to be communicating with the parents of children who are having problems with mathematics more frequently (see 2.4.3) and to be encouraging them to help with homework or supervision. Such a relationship may yet be found if the relationship between mathematics achievement and these types of involvement alone is investigated.

The parents' attitude to the school was not effected by their children's mathematics achievement. This is unexpected as parents often hold the school responsible for poor academic achievements (Hoover-Dempsey *et al*/1987:419) and thus, one might expect the parents to have a more negative attitude if their children were struggling with mathematics. Since the parents' attitudes to the school were generally very positive (see 5.6), perhaps they felt that the school was helping these children as much as was possible.

5.5.7 Hypothesis 7

With regard to hypothesis 7 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.7, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant positive correlation between **school initiated parental involvement** and learners' achievement in English.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parental attitude to the school** and **parent initiated parental involvement**.

To test these hypotheses the second term English marks of 218 learners were used. The Pearson-Product Moment correlation was used to ascertain if a significant positive correlation existed. The findings of the test are recorded in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15. Correlation between parental involvement and learners' English achievement.

	SIPI	PIPI	PAS
English achievement	-0.050	-0.019	-0.076
$p > 0.05$ for all correlations			

No significant positive correlation existed between any of these three measures of parental involvement and children's English achievement (see Table 5.15).

As is the case for mathematics achievement these results do not support the correlations found between parental involvement and academic achievement found by other researchers (see 5.5.6). However, as is the case for mathematics, this may be due to the particular measure of academic achievement, English grades, used, or because this study did not focus on correlations between this and Epstein's (1995:704) six types of parental involvement separately.

5.5.8 Hypothesis 8

With regard to hypothesis 8 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.8, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference in the average **school initiated parental involvement** between parents whose children attend different schools.
- The hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

Due to the low numbers of respondents whose children attended the two private schools, the respondents were divided into only four groups on the basis of which school their child attended.

Group 1: Parents whose children attended either of the two private schools, School A and School B (n = 18).

Group 2: Parents whose children attended School C (n = 37).

Group 3: Parents whose children attended School D (n = 82).

Group 4: Parents whose children attended School E (n = 81).

The F-test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the average parental involvement of the parents whose children attended the four different school groups for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5.

5.5.8.1 *Comparison between the parents whose children attended the four different school groups with regard to **school initiated parental involvement**.*

The average **school initiated parental involvement** for each of the four school groups was calculated and compared. The results are presented in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16 Comparison of the SIPI of the different school groups

Group	n	Mean SIPI	SD
1	18	49.111	10.420
2	37	49.568	11.572
3	82	49.634	10.530
4	81	44.309	13.379
F (3,214) = 3.34; p < 0.05			

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of the four school groups (see Table 5.17). Therefore, in order to determine between which groups these differences existed, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison test was used (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:350). The findings are presented in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17. Bonferroni analysis of the level of SIPI for school groups

School groups	Difference between the means	t value	P
1 – 2	0.456	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
1 – 3	0.523	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
1 – 4	4.802	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
2 – 3	0.067	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
2 – 4	5.259	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
3 – 4	5.326	t > 2.663	P < 0.05

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between groups 3 and 4 (see Table 5.17). These results indicate that the teachers at School D made a greater effort to initiate the involvement of parents than the teachers at School E.

Schools of lower SES have been found to have lower levels of some types of parental involvement (see 2.7.4.3). However, a relationship between school SES and

parental involvement does not explain the differences found between School D and E. School E actually had a slightly higher SES than School D, as indicated by higher school fees (see Table 4.1). Therefore the school with the higher SES had lower school initiated involvement. In fact, there was very little difference in the SES of School D and School E. Table 4.1 shows that the school fees at the two schools were very similar, classes were equally crowded and the buildings and facilities at both schools were of a similar standard (personal observation). The other schools fell between Schools E and D in their level of SIPI. This suggests that SES was not the decisive factor.

Research into which types of parental involvement are responsible for the differences between these two schools would probably shed light on why this difference exists. Ho and Willms (1996:132) found that schools varied considerably in terms of parent volunteering and attendance at PTA meetings but little where home discussion, home supervision and school communication were concerned.

The stance of the head-teacher, teachers and schools on parental involvement, however, plays a crucial role in determining the level and type of parental involvement that occurs at the school (see 2.7.4). It seems possible that School D had a more positive approach to involving parents in their children's education and, thus, had a higher level of SIPI than School E.

*5.5.8.2 Comparison between the parents whose children attended the four different school groups with regard to **parent initiated parental involvement**.*

The average **parent initiated parental involvement** for the parents whose children attended the four different school groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18. Comparison of the PIPI of the different school groups

School groups	N	Mean PIPI	SD
1	18	59.389	6.400
2	37	62.703	7.276
3	82	59.061	9.233
4	81	57.370	9.512
F (3, 214) = 3.08; p<0.05			

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** of parents whose children attended the four school groups (see Table 5.18). Therefore, in order to determine between which groups these differences existed, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison test was used. The findings are presented in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19. Bonferroni analysis of the level of PIPI for school groups

School groups	Difference between the means	t value	P
1 – 2	3.314	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
1 – 3	0.328	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
1 – 4	2.019	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
2 – 3	3.642	t < 2.663	p > 0.05
2 – 4	5.332	t > 2.663	P < 0.05
3 – 4	1.691	t < 2.663	p > 0.05

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between school groups 2 and 4 (see Table 5.19). This indicates that parents whose children attend School C were more involved in **parent initiated parental involvement** activities than parents whose children attend School E. No significant difference in **parent initiated parental involvement** was observed between any other school groups.

Again differences in the SES of the schools, reflected by parents' ability to pay the school fees (see Table 4.1), are not likely to explain the differences in the levels of PIPI seen here. Although School C does have a higher SES than School E there was no significant difference between the first school group, which represents the two private schools and had a considerably higher SES, and the other school groups. It seems more likely that there is some other reason that parents at School E initiated

less parental involvement. The low level of enthusiasm shown by the school in terms of initiating parental involvement (see 5.5.8.1), may have had a negative effect on the parents initiation of involvement. Epstein (1995:706-707) notes that parents feel more positive about their abilities to help when encouraged by the school.

Clearly, however, since there were no significant differences in either PIPI or SIPI (see 5.5.8.1) between more than one pair of schools, on the whole Swazi schools and parents initiated similar levels of parental involvement despite economic differences. Possibly this was due to strong similarities in their views of the roles of the parent, teacher and school.

5.5.8.3 Comparison between the parents whose children attended the four different school groups with regard to *parental attitude to the school*.

The average **parental attitude to the school** of each of the four groups of parents whose children attended the different school groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20. Comparison of the PAS of the different school groups

School group	N	Mean PAS	SD
1	18	44.556	6.972
2	37	47.892	4.783
3	82	45.171	7.002
4	81	44.667	7.083

There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the average **parental attitude to the school** of the four groups of parents whose children attended the four different schools (see Table 5.20). Thus, parents from all four school groups had similar attitudes to the schools their children attended. This suggests that the differences in the levels of PIPI between Schools C and E were not due to the parents at school E having a negative attitude to the school but, rather, due to

some other factor. Possibly parents at School E were not recognising their role in their children's education due to a lack of encouragement from the school.

5.5.9 Hypothesis 9

With regard to hypothesis 9 stated in paragraph 4.2.2.9, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference in the average **school initiated parental involvement** of parents of different ages.
- The hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The respondents were divided into three groups on the basis of their ages.

Group 1: 20 –30 years (n = 24).

Group 2: 30 – 40 years (n = 110).

Group 3: Above 40 years (n = 79).

The F-test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the average parental involvement of the parents in the three different age groups for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5.

5.5.9.1 *Comparison between the parents of the three different age groups with regard to **school initiated parental involvement***

The average **school initiated parental involvement** for each of the three age groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21. Comparison of the SIPI of the different parental age groups

Age group	n	Mean SIPI	SD
1	24	49.417	12.704
2	110	48.273	12.057
3	79	45.785	11.806
F (2,210) = 1.33; p>0.05			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of the three parental age groups (see Table 5.21). This suggests that teachers made the same amount of effort to involve parents regardless of the parent's age. These results are in accordance with those of Sitole (1993:124) who found no significant difference between parents of different ages and school initiated contact.

5.5.9.2 *Comparison between the parents of the three different age groups with regard to parent initiated parental involvement*

The average **parent initiated parental involvement** for each of the three responding parent age groups was calculated and compared. The results are presented in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22. Comparison of the PIPI of the different parental age groups

Age group	n	Mean PIPI	SD
1	24	60.583	6.206
2	110	60.509	8.026
3	79	56.671	10.311
F (2, 210) = 4.78; p<0.01			

There was a significant difference ($p<0.01$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** of the three age groups (see Table 5.22). Therefore, in order to determine between which groups these differences existed, the Bonferroni post hoc comparison test was used. These findings are presented in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23 Bonferroni analysis of the level of PIPI and parental age

Age groups	Difference between the means	t value	P
1 – 2	0.074	t< 2.413	p> 0.05
2 – 3	3.838	t> 2.413	p< 0.05
1 – 3	3.912	t< 2.413	p> 0.05

These results indicated that parents who were between 30 - 40 years of age were more involved in **parent initiated parental involvement** activities than parents who were above 40 years of age (see Table 5.23). These results are similar to those of Sitole (1993:124) who found 30–40 year old mothers to initiate more involvement than older or younger mothers, although no significant differences were observed for fathers. Mkwanazi (1994:29) noted that educators felt that older parents were less involved than younger parents. Some older parents have a more limited, traditional view of their role and place greater trust in the teacher as the professional who does not need their interference (Rasekoala 1997:27).

5.5.9.3 *Comparison between the parents of the three different age groups with regard to **parental attitude to the school**.*

The average **parental attitude to the school** for each of the three responding parent age groups was calculated and compared. The findings are presented in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24. Comparison of the PAS of the different parental age groups

Group	n	Mean PAS	SD
1	24	45.458	6.345
2	110	45.372	6.685
3	79	45.291	7.194

F (2,210) = 0.01; p > 0.05

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the average **parental attitude to the school** of the three responding parent age groups (see Table 5.24). This suggests that the parents in all three age groups had similar attitudes to the school and that it was not a negative attitude to the school that resulted in the parents who were over 40 initiating less parental involvement. This finding differs

from that of Sitole (1993:124) who found the more involved mothers to also have a significantly more positive attitude to the school.

5.5.10 Hypothesis 10

With regard to hypothesis 10 stated in paragraph 4.2.1.10, the following null hypothesis was tested:

- There is no significant difference between the average **school initiated parental involvement** of male and female parents.
- This hypothesis was also tested for **parent initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**.

The respondents were divided into two groups.

Group 1: Male parents (n = 67).

Group 2: Female parents (n = 145).

The means of both parent genders were calculated and compared for each of the three measures of parental involvement defined in 5.2.2.5. The findings are presented in Table 5.25.

Table 5.25. Difference between the average parental involvement scores of male and female parents.

Variable.	Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	df	P
SIPI	Male	67	47.075	12.419	0.31	210	p> 0.05
	Female	145	47.628	11.786			
PIPI	Male	67	56.925	10.142	2.21	210	p< 0.05
	Female	145	59.855	8.375			
PAS	Male	67	44.746	7.149	0.99	210	p> 0.05
	Female	145	45.745	6.682			

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) between the mean scores of the parents of different genders with regard to **school initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school** (see Table 5.25). This indicates that, in general, male and female parents do not differ significantly with regard to **school initiated parental involvement** and **parental attitude to the school**. One would expect both parents to have a similar attitude to the school, which they probably both played a role in choosing. Swazi teachers appear to provide as many opportunities for involvement to fathers as to mothers. However, research indicates that many teachers assume that mothers will be more involved than fathers (Tichenor 1998:253).

There was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) between the average **parent initiated parental involvement** between male and female parents (see Table 5.25). Mothers were involved to a greater extent in parental involvement activities that they could initiate than fathers. It is also likely that the responding parent was also the more involved parent. Thus, the higher number of mothers that responded to the questionnaire combined with the higher PIPI of mothers than fathers leaves little doubt that female parents did initiate more involvement than male parents. This finding is in line with those of several other studies that have found parental

involvement to be gendered (Reay 1995:345; Christenson *et al*/1992a:37). These studies have found that it is the mothers and other female caregivers that are involved in children's schooling regardless of family structure or marital status (Standing 1999:58).

This may simply be because females traditionally have a more nurturing role than males in many societies, including Swazi society, and as a result may feel that parental involvement in education is their responsibility. Reay (1995:346) found that both parents in the USA see parental involvement as the mother's responsibility.

5.6 Parental attitude to the school

A positive parental attitude to the school is vital for successful parental involvement (see 2.7.2.7). Since the aim of this study was to design an effective parental involvement programme for Swaziland it was essential to determine the attitudes of parents to the school.

The parents' responses to the items in PAS suggest, in contrast to the South African findings of Heystek and Louw (1999:25), that parents' attitudes to urban Swazi primary schools were remarkably positive. Researchers in the USA have also found, despite national reports that have criticised teachers, curricula, and standards at public schools, that parents there also tend to have very positive attitudes to these schools and teachers (Epstein 1986:280).

5.6.1 Most positive parental responses in the factor **parental attitude to the school**

In Table 5.26 those questions to which more than 80% of the parents responded positively are shown.

Table 5.26 Most positive parental responses in the factor PAS

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
1.This is a very good school	0.9	2.3	30.0	66.8
2. The teachers care about my child	1.4	4.1	39.0	55.5
3. My child likes to talk about school at home	2.3	10.1	27.5	60.1
5. I feel welcome at the school	2.8	7.8	28.0	61.5
7. The school and I have the same goals for my child	4.1	7.3	26.6	61.9
11. My child is learning as much as he can at this school	2.8	10.6	36.7	50.0
13. This school is a good place for learners and parents	4.6	15.1	35.3	45.0

Over 94% of the parents “agreed strongly” or “agreed a little” that their children attended a good school (Item 1) and that the teachers cared for their children (Item 2, Table 5.26). Almost 90% of the parents “agreed strongly” or “agreed a little” that their children liked to talk about school at home (Item 3), that they felt welcome at the school (Item 5), and that they and the school had the same goals (Item 7). Having similar goals is important as a consensus between the home and school helps to counter other negative outside influences and without this consensus the effectiveness of both educators and the family as socialising agents is compromised (Christenson *et al*/1992:195). For all of these items close to 60% of the parents not only agreed but actually “agreed strongly”.

Nearly 80% of the parents also agreed that their children were learning as much as they could (Item 11) and that the school was a good place for learners and parents (Item 13). However, a fairly large proportion of these parents only agreed a little to these items. Further, a substantial percentage of parents, 13.4% and 19.7%

respectively, disagreed with these statements. This suggests that, these schools must ensure that they are extending all their learners fully and that parents also benefit from them. Epstein (1991:349-350) mentions that schools must also be of benefit to parents, schools should make room for parents, including establishing resource rooms for their benefit.

Nevertheless, the responses to the items in this section indicate clearly that the vast majority of parents were satisfied with the school and felt comfortable there. This suggests that they trusted the school and would be open to suggestions by the school on how they could be more involved in their children's education. The hostility found between parents and schools in some studies, particularly between poor minority parents and middle-class schools (Ascher 1988:110), was not evident in these urban Swazi schools. This was probably because although education at urban Swazi schools, like that in foreign countries (Ascher 1988:110), is likely to reflect the values and goals of the teachers, the majority of teachers and parents were part of the same Swazi ethnic-racial community (see 4.2.4.1). Thus, these parents were likely to have felt that their values and goals were congruent with those of the school staff, as their response to Item 7 (see Table 5.26) suggested, and that there was continuity between the home and the school.

5.6.2 Less positive parental responses in the factor **parental attitude to the school**

Although all the items in the PAS section drew a majority of positive responses, the items shown in Table 5.27 also drew many negative responses. In each case 20% to 40% of the parents responded negatively. This suggests that schools may need to improve their policies and actions in these areas.

Table 5.27 Less positive parental responses in the factor PAS

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
37.The school tells me how my child is doing	5.5	21.1	31.2	42.2
6. Many parents I know help out at school	15.1	23.4	43.6	17.9
14. The school contacts me when my child is doing, or behaving well, and not only for problems	24.3	17.9	24.8	33.0
15.My child's teacher is interested in my opinions	11.5	15.1	33.9	39.5

Although Item 37 was originally in SIPI, it was easy to interpret the parents' responses to this item in terms of PAS, to which it was assigned after factor analysis (see Table 5.2), due to the similarity of the wording of the response choices of SIPI and PAS. More than 70% of the parents agreed that the school told them how their child was doing (see Table 5.27). These results suggest that most parents were satisfied that they were being informed about how their child was doing at school. Nevertheless, generally parents want information about how their children are doing at school (Crozier 1999: 322) and **all** parents should be satisfied that they know how their children are doing.

The more negative response to Item 14 (see Table 5.27), suggests that Item 37 was probably interpreted by most parents to refer to communication of their children's academic results. In Item 14, over 40% of the parents felt that schools only contacted them when their children had problems. The experiences of these parents are in accordance with research that indicates that most contact between teachers and parents occurs when children are having behaviour or learning problems (see 2.4.3). Nevertheless, the fact that 58% of the parents agreed that the school contacted them for positive things as well, suggests that teachers in Swaziland do not only contact parents when there are problems.

Although, the responses to Item 6 suggested that there was room for more parents to help at the school, the majority of parents reported that they knew many parents who helped at the school. These results were remarkably positive. A study by

Epstein (1986:281) done in Maryland in the USA discovered that 70% of parent's never helped in the classroom, on class trips or did fundraising.

Almost 40% of the parents agreed strongly that the school was interested in their opinions. This is important as when parents feel valued they also feel more confident their ability to help their children and are likely to be less hostile and more receptive, to the school (see 2.7.2.6). Both of these factors are likely to increase parental involvement. Thus, it is unfortunate that almost 34% of parents only agreed a little and over 25% disagreed with this statement.

5.6.3 Items 4 and 12 in the factor **parental attitude to the school**

As discussed in 5.2.3, Items 4 and 12 did not deal directly with the parents' attitude to the school. As a result they are discussed separately.

Table 5.28 Parental responses to Items 4 and 12 in the factor PAS

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
4. My child should get more homework	3.7	10.1	21.6	64.7
12. Parents get more involved in the lower grades	10.1	23.4	32.6	33.9

The parents' responses to Item 4 (see Table 5.28) indicate that Swazi parents, like the majority of other parents (Olympia, Jenson, Clark and Sheridan 1992:309) believe strongly in the importance of homework. This suggests that if they were convinced of the importance of their own role in helping their children with homework and knew how to do so, they would be willing and effective partners in this area (see 2.4.5 & 2.7.2.6).

The parents' responses to Item 12 (see Table 5.28) also show that most parents believed that parents were more involved in the lower grades, as has been found in many other studies (see 2.8).

5.7 Parent initiated parental involvement

The section PIFI measured how involved parents were in their children's education in terms of activities that they could decide whether or not to initiate and that were essentially in their, rather than the schools, control (see 5.2.2.5). Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the school's attitude to parental involvement, is decisive in terms of how much and what type of parental involvement actually occurs and has a large impact on the parents confidence and motivation to be involved (see 2.7.2.6 and 2.7.4).

Since negative responses to these items would probably be perceived by the parents to reflect badly on themselves, it was possible that parent responses were biased in the direction of what they believed to be more socially acceptable responses. Thus, the parents' responses may have been more positive than was really the case. An attempt was made to limit this effect by assuring parents of the anonymity of the questionnaire.

5.7.1 Parent initiated activities that the majority of parents had done frequently

Those activities which the majority of parents reported that they had done **many times that year** are presented in Table 5.29 below.

Table 5.29 Most frequent PIPI activities

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
16. I talk to my child about school work	0.9	0.0	15.1	83.9
20. I help my child with homework	3.7	2.8	27.5	66.1
21. I check that my child has done his/her homework	5.1	4.1	22.0	68.8
27. I teach my child household chores	3.2	6.9	22.0	67.9
35. I limit the amount of time my child watches TV	6.9	2.8	33.9	56.4
36. I have rules about homework	8.3	8.3	21.1	62.4

The findings suggest that majority of parents were strongly involved in terms of home discussion (Item 16, Table 5.29). Since home discussion has been found to have a particularly strong impact on learner academic success (see 2.4.8), this finding is encouraging. Epstein (1986:282) found that home discussion was one of the most popular techniques encouraged by teachers and experienced by parents.

The vast majority of parents reported that they helped with homework, most (66%) many times (see Item 20, Table 5.29). This finding contrasts with that of Heystek (1999:102) where only 14% "good parental participation" in homework was noted by teachers and 68% "little participation". The *American National Educational Goals* report (in Balli, 1998:143), documents that while 65% of parents reported that they helped their first graders with homework, this percentage had dropped to 14% by the eighth grade. Baker and Stevenson (1986:158-159) found that 83% of mothers claimed to have helped their child with homework that year, while 22% did so regularly. Although the Swazi parents may have rated themselves higher than

teachers would have in order to provide socially acceptable responses, the much lower self-ratings for other items (see Tables 5.30 and 5.31) suggest that the majority of Swazi parents, unlike parents in communities in South Africa and the USA, frequently do help with homework at this level. This suggests that Swazi parents realise the importance of homework, and their role in it. This finding is further supported by parental responses to Items 4 (see Table 5.28), 21 and 36 (see Table 5.29). Homework can be one of the most beneficial forms of parental involvement (see 2.4.5).

Items 21, 35 & 36 (see Table 5.29) describe supervisory activities. Almost two thirds of the parents frequently checked that their children had done their homework, limited the amount of time their children watched TV, and had rules about homework. This is encouraging since home supervision has been found to result in a number of positive child outcomes including improved learner attitudes, behaviour and learning (see 2.4.2). These findings are in accordance with those of Epstein (1986:280-281) who found that one of the most pervasive forms of parent involvement is supervision of their children at home. However, the fact that between 10 - 17 % of parents did not do these things at all that year suggests that not all parents realised the benefits of supervising their children's time and activities, and that they need to be informed of these benefits.

Item 27 falls under parenting (Epstein1995:706). Children require chores at home in order to learn responsibility, however, there must be a balance between the time they spend on these chores and their other activities (Epstein 1995:706). Clearly, the majority of Swazi parents ensured that their children did chores. However, due to the way in which the question was phrased, it is not clear whether parents understood that a balance must be maintained between chores and other activities.

5.7.2 Parent initiated activities that the majority of parents had not done frequently

Those activities that the majority of parents reported that they had done either infrequently or not at all are presented in Table 5.30. Since the questionnaires were completed in October, it seems likely that if the parent had not performed an activity yet that year, that he or she was not going to at all, that year.

Table 5.30. Infrequent PIPI activities

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
17. I visit the classroom	15.6	11.5	61.5	11.5
18. I read to my child	18.3	13.3	40.4	28.0
19. I listen to my child read	6.0	10.1	36.2	47.7
22. I see that my child makes up work after being absent	11.9	19.3	27.1	41.7
23. I listen to, or read, a story my child wrote	9.6	12.4	42.2	35.8
24. I practice spelling or other skills before a test	9.2	17.4	39.0	34.4
25. I talk to my child about TV programmes	20.7	7.8	33.0	38.5
34. I take my child to museums, libraries, air shows or other educational venues	14.7	14.7	38.5	32.1

More than 70% of the parents visited the classroom during they year, however, most of them visited the classroom just "once or a few times" during the year (see Item 17, Table 5.30). Some of these parents probably visited the classroom for teacher-parent meetings, which were held in the classrooms (personal observation). However, since almost 63% of the parents reported that they had not attended a parent-teacher meeting that year (see Item 32, Table 5.35), many of these parents must have visited for other purposes. Only 11.5% of the parents, actually visited the classroom many times and 27.1% of the parents never visited their child's classroom at all that year. This suggests that parents did not fully understand the extent to which their children would benefit from these visits because although most parents felt welcome at the school (see Item 5, Table 5.26), most did not visit their children's classroom frequently.

The majority of parents, 72.1%, 52.3%, 64.2% respectively, did not read to their children (Item 18), listen to their children read (Item 19), or listen to or read a story that their children had written (Item 23), more than a few times a year at most (see Table 5.30). Since reading and writing form the foundation of learning (Overett & Donald 1998:347), and parental involvement in these activities has been shown to benefit children (see 2.4.5) this is clearly a very serious situation. It cannot be acceptable that 31.7%, 16.1% and 22.0% respectively, of these parents had not done these things even once that year. It seems unlikely that parents did not do these things due to lack of ability since the vast majority were well educated (see 5.5.2) and reported that they were able to help with reading (see 5.7.4). It seems likely that parents were not aware of the benefits, or the necessity, of their involvement in these ways.

A large percentage of parents (31.2%) reported that they did not see that their child made up work after being absent (see Item 22, Table 5.30). This probably does not tell one much about their level of involvement, however. This is because it is quite likely that many of these parents were those of children who had not been absent that year. Thus, these parents answered negatively because they had not needed to make sure their child caught-up work. The question was poorly phrased especially since the majority of parents' home language was not English (see 4.2.4.2).

It is of concern that roughly two thirds of the parents only practiced spelling or other skills before a test only a few times during the year at most (see Item 24, Table 5.30). Swazi education is based on a policy of continuous assessment (DP 1998:172), thus, children are continually tested and there are a great many opportunities for parents to help them prepare. Clearly, these parents need to be encouraged to help their children prepare for tests.

It is also unfortunate how few parents (38.5%) discussed TV programmes with their children frequently (Item 25, Table 5.30). Epstein (1986:282) found that very few parents watched and discussed TV programmes with their children. Swazi children, like children in many other countries, tend to watch a great deal of TV (personal observation). Parents can help children to explore their environment by explaining and discussing TV programmes with their children (Christenson *et al*/1992b:195; Jantjes 1995:295). Further, by discussing and restricting the more morally questionable TV programmes parents can help reduce the negative influence that such programmes may have on their children. The benefits of discussing and monitoring TV programmes must be pointed out to parents. Ballantine (1999:171) notes that parents should restrict the number of hours their children spend watching TV.

The majority of the parents reported that they took their children to educational venues at least once during the year (see Item 34, Table 5.30). However, almost 30% had not done so at all that year and need to be encouraged to do so.

5.7.3 **Parent initiated** activities that a substantial proportion of parents had not done at all

There were a number activities which the only a very small proportion of parents reported that they did many times a year and which at least 40% of parents reported that they had not done at all that year. These are presented in Table 5.31.

Table 5.31 PIPI activities not done by at least 40% of the parents

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
26. I play games at home to teach my child new things	22.5	17.9	36.2	23.4
28. I talk with the teacher on the phone or at school	25.2	13.8	37.6	23.4

The findings suggest that few parents understood the importance of playing educational games with their children (see Item 26, Table 5.31). Playing educational games is an effective and pleasant way for children to learn (Ascher 1988:109; Rogers 1989:37-38; Caldwell 1998:365). A number of parental involvement programmes include family games that are related to school work (Moles 1982:45). Parents need to understand the potential learning value of these games for their children (Caldwell 1998:367).

Just over 60% of parents reported that they had spoken to the teacher on the phone or in person that year (see Item 28, Table 5.31). Since 70% of the parents reported that they had visited the classroom that year (see Item 17, Table 5.32), a great deal of these conversations probably occurred there. However, almost 40% of the parents reported that they had no verbal communication, of any variety, with teachers (Item 28, Table 5.31). These results are comparable to those of Epstein (1986:281) who found in her study in the USA that more than one third of the parents she studied had not met with the teacher that year and almost two thirds of the parents never communicated by phone with the teacher. Communication by telephone between teachers and parents is common in some foreign schools (Jones 1998:9). However, in Swaziland telephonic communication may be limited because most Swazi schools only have one telephone and teachers are hard to reach as they are not available during lessons (personal observation). The teachers could, however, make their home telephone numbers available. Parents and teachers

should be encouraged to talk to each other frequently either by telephone or in person (see 2.4.3).

5.7.4 Items reassigned to parent initiated parental involvement

Items 8 and 9 were reassigned from PAS to PIPI (see Table 5.2). Since the wording of the responses of these two sections differ, with PAS referring to what parents feel able to do and PIPI to what parents actually do, the original wording of these items is used in Table 5.32.

Table 5.32 Parental responses to reassigned Items 8 and 9.

Item	Parental response in %			
	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree strongly
8. I feel I can help my child in reading	2.3	1.4	24.8	71.6
9. I feel I can help my child in mathematics	2.8	6.9	27.1	63.3

The vast majority of parents agreed that they were able to help with their child's reading (see Item 8, Table 5.32). This makes sense in view of the high levels of education attained by the majority of these parents (see 5.5.2). However, well under 50% of the parents reported that they frequently performed activities that would improve their children's reading abilities (see Items 18, 19, 23 & 24, Table 5.30). Thus, these parents' belief in their abilities did not always translate into action. Possibly parents felt that reading was being dealt with sufficiently at school and that their involvement was not necessary, or perhaps other barriers were effecting the frequency with which they carried out these activities.

Item 9 questioned whether parents felt they could help their children with mathematics. A very large proportion of parents agreed that they could (see Table 5.32). However, because of the wording of this item, which was originally part of

PAS and not PIPI, it is not possible to determine from this questionnaire whether parents actually did help their children with mathematics.

5.8 School initiated parental involvement

The SIPI section reports the parents' perceptions of the school and teachers efforts to initiate parental involvement (see 5.2.2.5). It is vital to determine to what extent, and in what ways, the school initiates parental involvement as this is largely responsible for how much parental involvement actually occurs at a school (see 2.7.4).

Since these responses do not reflect on the parents in any way, one can expect them to be more honestly addressed. These were, however, the parents' perceptions of what the schools were doing, rather than definitive statements of what the schools were actually doing.

5.8.1 Parental involvement activities that the schools made the greatest effort to initiate

Those activities which 50% or more of the parents felt the school was doing well or very well are shown in Table 5.33.

Table 5.33 Activities that the schools made the greatest effort to initiate

Item	Parental response in %			
	Does not do this	Does this but could do much better	Does this fairly well	Does this very well
The school...				
39. Asks me to check my child's homework	17.4	19.7	24.8	38.1
42. Sends home clear notices that can be read	11.5	10.6	17.9	60.1
43. Invites me to events at the school	17.4	8.7	20.2	53.7
44. Invites me to parent-teacher meetings at the school	7.3	10.6	14.7	67.4
45. Sends home news about things happening at school	18.4	16.5	27.5	37.6
46. Asks me to raise funds for the school	31.7	14.2	14.7	39.5

Foreign studies indicate that most teachers expect parents to supervise homework (Olympia *et al*/1992:310). The majority of Swazi parents (62.8%) reported that the school asked them to check their children's homework "fairly well" or "very well" (see Item 39, Table 5.33). This figure corresponds well with the 68.8% of the parents who did this many times during the year (see Item 21, Table 5.29). It is likely that being asked to check homework by the school encouraged parents to do so. Clearly, as less than 10% of parents did not check their children's homework at all during the year (see Item 21, Table 5.29), some parents were checking spontaneously without the encouragement of the school. Since home supervision benefits the child (see 2.4.2), schools and teachers need to put emphasis on the parents' role in checking homework such that over 37% of the parents do not feel that the schools efforts in this respect are inadequate.

Over 77% of the parents reported that the school sent home clear notices that could be read (see Item 42, Table 5.33). The responses to this item and to Items 37 (see Table 5.27) and 43, 44 & 45 (see Table 5.33) suggest that school to home communication is a strength at these Swazi schools. This finding is consonant with those of Tichenor (1998:251) and Edwards and Warin (1999:331-335), who found that teachers and schools emphasise school to home communication. School to home communication is important as parents feel confident to help their children or

request changes to improve activities when they know what the school is doing (Epstein 1986:288).

A small proportion of parents (11.5%), reported that the school did not send home clear notices at all (Item 42, Table 5.33). It is possible that the learners themselves were not delivering the school's messages. Perhaps teachers should provide incentives to learners to ensure that they deliver the messages and parents should monitor whether their children are delivering the messages. This figure is comparable with the study done by Epstein (1986:281) that found that 16.4% of parents received no memos from their child's teacher.

Over 73% of the parents reported that the school invited them to events at the school "very well" or "fairly well" (see Item 43, Table 5.33). This is important as the attendance of parents at drama and athletics events, has been found to improve children's academic performance (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76).

Most parents (over 80%) reported that the school invited them to parent-teacher meetings well (see Item 44, Table 5.33). The 7% of the parents who reported that the school did not hold parent-teacher meetings, may have missed the notices that informed them of this occasion. Parent-teacher meetings seem to be one of the prevalent forms of parental involvement initiated by the schools and teachers in Swaziland as is also the case in South African (van Wyk 2001:120), and other foreign schools (Epstein & Becker 1982:113; Weiss & Edwards 1992:231).

Just over half of the parents reported that the school asked them to raise funds well (Item 46, Table 5.33). However, over 45% of the parents said the school could "do much better" in this respect or did not ask them to fundraise at all. It seems surprising that such a high proportion of parents were being underutilised as fundraisers as this is one of the most traditional forms of parental involvement (van

Wyk 2001:120). These figures match up well with the parents' response to Item 33 (see Table 5.35). Half of the parents said they had done fundraising for the school once to many times during the year, the other half had done no fundraising. These findings suggest a relationship between the schools efforts to initiate fundraising and the amount of fundraising done by parents.

5.8.2 Parental involvement activities that the school made little effort to initiate

The five schools made little effort to initiate certain parental involvement activities. The majority of parents reported that the school could 'do much better,' or did not do at all, the activities shown in Table 5.34.

Table 5.34 Activities that the schools made little effort to initiate

Item	Parental response in %			
	Does not do this	Does this but could do much better	Does this fairly well	Does this very well
The school...				
38. Tells me what skills my child needs to learn each year	29.8	26.2	21.1	22.9
40. Gives me ideas of how to help my child at home	31.2	26.1	21.6	21.1
41. Asks me to volunteer for a few hours at the school	61.5	16.1	11.0	11.5
47. Asks me for information about my child	42.2	21.1	19.3	17.4
48. Asks me to help make decisions about what and how my child is taught	53.7	20.2	14.2	11.9
49. Asks me to make decisions about school staff.	80.3	9.6	7.3	2.8
50. Asks me to help make decisions about school discipline	72.5	11.5	9.2	6.9
51. Asks me to help make decisions about school uniform	71.1	12.4	11.5	5.0
52. Asks me to help make decisions about how school funds are spent	63.8	16.1	9.2	11.0
53. Asks the community to play a role in the children's schooling	50.5	19.7	19.7	10.1
54. Involves local businesses and organisations in my child's schooling	53.7	26.1	9.2	11.0

Almost 56% of the parents felt that the school either did not inform them at all or could "do much better" at telling them what skills their children needed to learn each year (see Item 38, Table 5.34). This result is in concordance with the finding that parents want more information about what their children are doing at school and how to support them (Crozier 1999:322). It is important that Swazi teachers and schools realise that learners will benefit if their parents are aware of what their children are supposed to be learning and are, consequently, able to support this learning at home or even contribute to it at the school (Epstein 1986:288).

Epstein (1986:280) reports that fewer than 30% of the parents in her study felt that teachers gave them many ideas of how to help their children in reading or mathematics. This finding accords with the results of this study in which over 57% of the parents felt that the school did not give them ideas on how to help their children at home or "could do this much better" (see Item 40, Table 5.34). This is a serious situation as the one of the most important criterion for the success of parental involvement in these activities is that parents receive adequate instruction in their roles (McKenna & Willms 1998:34). Furthermore, Epstein (1987a:127) found that parents received most of their ideas for involvement in learning activities in the home from the teachers. Parents need to be shown strategies of how to help in the home and these strategies must be developmentally appropriate for the child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995:315). In fact several studies have shown that parental involvement in learning activities in the home may even be detrimental to the child when it is offered in inappropriate ways (see 2.9.2).

That these five schools did not emphasise or encourage parent volunteering at the school is clear from the fact that over 61% of the parent's reported that their school does not do this, with an additional 16.1% saying that the school "could do this much better" (Item 41, Table 5.34). Parents in South Africa are given very little opportunity by schools to volunteer in the classroom (Heystek 1999:103; van Wyk

2001:123). Heystek (1999:103) found that no structures or planning existed to accommodate these activities and that parents could not participate in these activities even if they wished to. This may also be the case in Swaziland. Tichenor (1998:252) found that student teachers felt the least positive about parents volunteering at school. This may be because teachers feel uncomfortable with parents in the classroom (Newport 1992:49-50; McKenna & Willms 1998:36).

However, in contrast to their response to Item 41, the majority of parents (60%) responded to that they knew many parents that helped out at the school (see Item 6, Table 5.27). This suggests that these parents may have had a false impression about the extent to which other parents were involved at the school. Alternatively, if many parents really were helping at the school, most were doing so almost entirely on their own initiative and were not being invited to do so by the school.

Epstein (1986:281) states that most communication activities flow only one way, from the school to the home, and that there is often no encouragement for communication from the parents at most schools. This also seems to be true for these Swazi schools at which school to home communication seems to be a strength (see 5.8.1), while home to school communication seems to be a weakness. At these schools 63.2% of the parents reported that the school either did not ask them for information about their child or "could do this much better" (see Item 47, Table 5.34). Edwards and Warin (1999:334) found that schools in their study made very little attempt to learn about the social worlds of the children who attended them. Only 17.4 % of Swazi parents felt the school did this "very well". Further, while the majority of parents felt the school was interested in their opinions (see Item 15, Table 5.27), it seems that the teachers were not interested in parents' opinions about their children. Moreover, the parent's responses to Items 48 – 52 (see Table 5.34) suggest that teachers and schools did not value parents opinions where decisions are concerned either. Thus, one wonders what parent opinions the parents

felt the school was interested in. Swazi teachers and schools need to be informed that the parents also have valuable information and opinions which are beneficial to all participants in the education situation (Scott-Jones 1988:68; Crozier 1999:114). Furthermore, teachers need to be taught how to encourage communication from the parents (Peressini 1998:322).

Items 48 - 52 (see Table 5.34) all center on the parents' role as decision-makers. Despite the fact that many authors feel that decision-making by parents is an essential part of true parental participation (see 2.4.6), these items received the most negative responses of all the items in the questionnaire. Between 73 to 89 % of parents responded that the school did not ask parents to help make decisions or could "do much better" in this respect. Most of these parents reported that the school did not ask them to help make decisions at all.

These findings are to be expected for Items 49 and 50 as the Ministry of Education is responsible for making these decisions in Swaziland and offers even teachers and schools very little role in these decisions (see 3.2).

The response to Item 48 "The school asks me to help make decisions about what and how my child is taught" indicates that the majority of parents were not being allowed to help decide the teaching methods used (see Table 5.34). Further this response indicates that despite the government's policy of consultation with parents on curriculum developments (see 3.3.2.1), the vast majority of parents did not feel that they were being consulted on this issue.

Decisions about school uniform and how school funds were spent are, however, left to the individual school. Thus, it is a pity that the findings of this study suggest that parents were not even given the opportunity to make decisions in these limited areas (see Items 51 & 52, Table 5.34).

It should be noted that these items did not ask whether parents actually make these decisions, rather only if they were asked to “help” make these decisions. Thus, the findings suggest that parents at these five schools have virtually no role in decision-making at all. This is contrary to the situation in most Australian, American, Canadian and British schools, where, while parents may play an inadequate role in decision-making, they at least have an advisory role or some limited direct input into decisions (see 2.4.6). The results of this study suggest that, like South African teachers (see 3.4.4.3), Swazi teachers, and the Ministry of Education, do not value parents as decision-makers. Furthermore, this situation is more serious in Swaziland as, unlike the situation in South Africa, Swazi educational legislation does not support any role for parents as decision-makers (see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).

Items 53 and 54 (see Table 5.34) concern community collaboration. Over 70% of parents felt that the school either did not involve the community or could do so much better. These results suggest that community involvement at Swazi schools is very limited as is the case in South African schools (see 3.4.3). Schools need to be made aware of the many possibilities of community involvement (see 2.4.7) and must be encouraged to develop relationships with the community.

5.8.3 Items reassigned to school initiated parental involvement

Five items in the section PIPI were reassigned to the section SIPI after factor analysis (see Table 5.2). The responses to these items are shown in Table 5.35.

Table 5.35 Items reassigned to SIPI

Item	Parental response in %			
	Parent does not do this	Parent has not done this yet this year	Parent has done this once or a few times	Parent has done this many times
29. I go to PTA/PTO meetings	18.3	20.6	31.2	29.8
30. I go to sports events at the school	42.7	29.4	17.9	10.1
31. I go to plays, musicals or other social or cultural events at the school	43.1	30.3	15.6	11.0
32. I go to parent-teacher evenings or meetings	38.1	24.8	20.2	17.0
33. I do fundraising for the school	26.6	21.6	15.1	36.7

Exactly 61% of the parents reported that they had attended PTA meetings once to many times during the year (see Item 29, Table 5.35). However, parents were not asked to help make decisions by the school (see Items 48-52, Table 5.34). Thus, while the responses to Item 29 indicate that PTAs must exist and function in most of these schools, PTAs apparently do not accord parents decision-making powers. Mkwanazi (1994:26) also found that most of the Soweto schools she studied had PTAs but that these did not accord parents true management roles.

Almost 40% of parents did not attend PTA meetings that year (see Item 29, Table 5.35). This is somewhat higher than the 23% that did not attend these meetings in black South African schools as rated by the teachers (Heystek 1999:101). However, Heystek (1999:102) notes that there were still some schools that did not have a PTA at the time of his research. It is possible that Swazi parents may not have attended PTA meetings due to the infrequency of these events at the school their child attended or due to the non-existence of a PTA at some schools. Alternatively, since parents have little say in educational decisions and often do not find PTA meetings enjoyable (Parr *et al*/1993:38), some may have felt that it was pointless for them to attend such meetings.

Although almost 74% of parents responded that the school invited them to events at the school "fairly" or "very well" (Item 43, Table 5.33), the majority of the parents,

over 70%, had not attended plays, musicals, cultural or sport events that year (see Items 30 & 31, Table 5.35). Less than 30% of parents had attended these events at all during the year. This is similar to Heystek's (1999:104) levels of good participation of 25.8% and 38.4 % for attendance of sport and social functions, respectively, in South Africa. These findings suggest that a lack of knowledge and poor communication were not responsible for the low attendance of these events. The reassignment of these items from PIPI to SIPI suggests that these low attendance figures at cultural, musical, social or sports events may have been because most schools did not hold many, or even any, of these events, rather than due to a choice made by the parents. Since parent attendance at such events has been shown to improve learners' school performance (see 2.4.4), schools should be encouraged to hold these events frequently.

Despite the fact that the vast majority of parents felt that the school did a good job of inviting them to the parent-teacher meetings (Item 44, Table 5.33) over 62% reported that they had not gone to these meetings that year (see Item 32, Table 5.35). A relatively small proportion of parents, 17%, attended many times during the year. This figure is similar to that found by Heystek (1999:104) who found only 19% good attendance at parent-teacher meetings, as reported by teachers. In this Swazi study, however, a further 20% of parents responded that they attended once to a few times a year. Since it is likely that these meetings were not held more often than once or a few times a year in most schools, this finding suggests that parent-teacher meeting may be better attended in this urban community than was the case for the South African community Heystek studied. However, as Heystek's data are based on teachers' views rather than parents' responses, these data are difficult to compare since the parents' responses may be biased in a socially acceptable direction. Nevertheless, it is of great concern that over 62% of Swazi parents had not attended such meetings that year, despite the response that over 80% had been invited well (see Item 44, Table 5.33). This figure is much higher than that found by Epstein

(1986: 281) in her study in the USA, where 35% of the parents were found to never have attended parent-teacher meetings.

As discussed in section 5.8.1 the findings of Item 46 (see Table 5.33) and Item 33 (see Table 5.35) suggest a relationship between the schools efforts to initiate fundraising and the amount of fundraising done by parents. This is supported by the reassignment of Item 33 from PIPI to SIPI (see Table 5.2). It is possible that some parents were given very little opportunity to fundraise by the teachers and schools. Since Swazi schools are inadequately funded (see 3.2), this is most unfortunate. The Swazi Ministry of Education notes that, "The tight budgetary situation over the years (in Swaziland) has made self-help efforts by parents and local communities particularly important" (IE 1994:15).

5.9 Summary of findings and discussion

Factor analysis confirmed the construct validity of the questionnaire although a few items had to be reassigned to other sections and one item was discarded. The resulting three factors were named **school initiated parental involvement (SIPI)**, **parent initiated parental involvement (PIPI)**, and **parental attitude to the school (PAS)**. Item analysis supported the reliability of the questionnaire, since the alpha reliability coefficient for all three sections was close to 1.

The testing of the ten hypotheses revealed findings of which some were in accordance with foreign and South African research, while others reflected the unique social circumstances of Swaziland. No significant relationship was found between SIPI and any of the family background characteristics tested. These findings suggest that Swazi teachers and schools made similar efforts to involve all parents regardless of family background. However some groups of parents were

found to initiate more parental involvement than others (PIPI), and some groups of parents had a better attitude to the school (PAS).

Although some foreign researchers have found a positive relationship between parental involvement and SES, the findings of this study were in accordance with those researchers who found no significant relationship between SES and parental involvement. This may be due to the largely homogenous nature of the parent-teacher community in respect to race-ethnicity. Sociocultural congruency existed between the majority of parents, including those of lower SES, and the teachers and school. Thus, parents with lower SES should not have felt alienated or distanced from the school and were not treated differently by teachers, who would also have had difficulty identifying them.

No significant relationship between parents' home language and their involvement was found for any of the three measures of parental involvement. This was probably because most siSwati-speaking parents were proficient in the use of English, which was the medium of communication and instruction at these schools. Further siSwati-speaking parents experienced no cultural barriers to their involvement. English-speaking minority parents were no less involved than siSwati speaking parents, despite having a different culture from the school, probably because they did not experience the barriers to involvement related to language differences and lower SES that minorities in some other countries experience.

Possibly because they had lower expectations of the school, Swazi parents with a secondary education had a more positive attitude to the school than parents with tertiary education. However, like parents in South Africa, they did not differ in terms of either parent or school initiated involvement. This was not surprising since parents in both groups should have been in the position to help their children. In fact, only a tiny proportion of parents had less than secondary education, so illiteracy was not

the major barrier to parental involvement that it is in South Africa. The same is true for unemployment, which is rare in urban Swaziland.

Although levels of parental involvement were similar at most schools, School D had a greater level of SIPI than School E. This was probably due to a more positive teacher and school approach to parental involvement at School D. The parents at School E were also less involved than those at School C in terms of PIPI, possibly reflecting a less positive and encouraging school attitude to parental involvement at School E. Unlike some foreign studies there was no link between the SES of the school and parental involvement.

As had been found in South Africa, Swazi teachers did not appear to discriminate against older parents. However parents older than 40 initiated less parental involvement than younger parents. While these parents did not differ in their attitude to the school it is likely that they did differ in terms of their conception of their own role. Older parents probably envision a more limited conventional role for themselves.

As the findings of foreign studies have suggested, mothers tended to be significantly more involved than fathers in terms of parent initiated involvement. This is likely to be due to the conservative view that involvement in their children's education is a maternal role.

Contrary to foreign studies, no significant relationship was found between parental involvement and parents' marital status or between parental involvement and children's achievement in either mathematics or English. However, it was possible that a relationship between the involvement of parents in this community and children's academic achievements existed. Had a different measure of achievement been used, this relationship might have been found.

The analysis of parents' responses to the items in **parental attitude to the school** indicated that Swazi parents, unlike South African parents, had a very positive attitude to the school. This was probably due to the high level of sociocultural congruency between the majority of parents and the school. This suggests that parents may be open to suggestions from the school that they become more involved in their children's education. Parents' attitudes are likely to improve even more if they derive direct benefits from the school, and if schools actively "make room" for them. Schools must ensure that they emphasise positive communication.

Analysis of the section **parent initiated parental involvement** indicated that Swazi parents were extremely active in terms of home discussion and helping with homework. This is encouraging since parental involvement in learning activities in the home is particularly beneficial to children. The findings suggested that Swazi parents realized the importance of their involvement in homework to a far greater degree than either parents from the USA or South Africa. The vast majority of Swazi parents supervised their children's homework activities and also limited TV watching.

However, Swazi parents need to be encouraged to initiate reading activities with their children, visit their children's classrooms, discuss TV programmes with them, help them prepare for tests, and take them to educational venues more frequently. Swazi parents did not seem to fully realise the beneficial nature of these activities. Schools must also encourage these activities.

A large proportion of parents never played educational games with their child and did not seem to be aware of the benefits of such games. Like parents in the US.A, over a third of Swazi parents had not spoken to their child's teacher that year. Clearly, ways must be found to ensure that there is more contact between teachers and these parents.

In terms of **school initiated parental involvement** one of the strengths of these five schools was school to home communication. Other prevalent forms of parent involvement initiated by the school were asking parents to check their children's homework and encouraging parents to raise funds for the school. This supportive financial role for parents is also a role expected of parents by the Ministry of Education (see 3.3.2.1). Thus, these Swazi schools tended to emphasise the conventional parent involvement activities favoured by schools worldwide. Nevertheless, although these areas represented the schools' strengths, the responses of the parents suggested that there was considerable room for these schools to become more active in initiating even these types of parental involvement.

Moreover, these schools did not inform parents about the skills that their children needed to learn or teach them how to help their children at home, despite the fact that effective parental involvement depends on these things. As is also the case in many other foreign schools, parents were not encouraged to volunteer at the school and home to school communication was neglected.

Unlike the parents in many foreign schools, Swazi parents were given virtually no opportunity to make any decisions even in those areas that did not fall under the province of the Ministry of Education. In fact, even though assigned a role in curriculum development by policy, parents did not seem to actually play any role in this activity. While PTAs were attended by the majority of parents, these bodies played little role in school governance. The majority of parents did not attend cultural or sport events and, as is the case in South Africa, also did not attend parent-teacher meetings. This may be due to the rarity of such events.

5.10 Conclusions and implications for development of a parental involvement programme

In conclusion, the findings suggest that a parent involvement programme for urban Swaziland primary schools may face fewer obstacles than such programmes are likely to face in countries such as South Africa and other foreign countries which have highly heterogeneous populations in terms of race-ethnicity and levels of education or both. Swazi teachers did not seem to discriminate between the various groups of parents on the basis of family background factors. In the case of parents with different SES or education levels this lack of discrimination was probably, largely, as a result of the homogeneity of the urban Swazi teacher-parent population in respect to race-ethnicity and education level. It is likely that for the same reason no differences in parent initiated parental involvement between parents of different SES were found. Since virtually no parents were illiterate or unemployed these factors did not form barriers to parental involvement for the majority of urban Swazi's. Nor were home language or marital status barriers to the involvement of the majority of parents. This meant that the two groups of parents that the Swazi parental involvement programme would particularly have to encourage to become involved are parents over 40 years and fathers.

The initiation of a successful Swazi parental involvement programme in urban Swazi primary schools is also favoured by the positive attitude of parents to the school, and the fact that parents appeared to already be involved in learning activities in the home and home supervision. However, Swazi schools seem to have a particularly limited role for parents. This role included fundraising and encouraging parents to check their children's homework. These schools emphasised school to home communication.

It is likely that parents' poor attendance at cultural or sporting events may have been largely due to the infrequency of such events. Home to school communication, volunteering at the school and decision-making were not encouraged, and these schools clearly did not offer parents anything like a true partnership in their children's education. The actions of these schools are those expected of schools that follow, either consciously or unconsciously, Swap's Protective Model, Epstein's Separate Spheres of Influence Model, or view parents as consumers according to Reeve's model (see 2.7.4.4). It is likely that the limited view of the role of parents held by Swazi education policy makers (see 3.3.2) underlies, at least in part, these schools' conventional and narrow view of parental involvement. In fact, even this limited policy is not fully implemented since the majority of parents had not been consulted about the curriculum.

Since the efforts of teachers and schools to involve parents are largely responsible for the extent and ways in which parents are involved, it is hardly surprising that Swazi parents appeared to be unaware of the importance of their frequent involvement in many educational activities. These activities included visits to their children's classrooms, taking part in reading activities with their children, helping their children prepare for tests, taking their children to educational venues, playing educational games with their children, attending parent-teacher meetings, and communicating with the teacher.

Consequently, a Swazi programme of parental involvement should educate parents, teachers and even the educational authorities, to envision a wider and more active role for parents in their children's education. The nature of this programme in relation to the findings of this quantitative research as well as the findings of the qualitative research (revealed in Chapter 6) will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6

Qualitative findings and discussion

"I don't think they [parents] have that space for putting their views. They are not involved. I think that is something the Ministry has to do, try at this time to involve them, because we need them, we need their ideas" (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

6.1 Introduction

Patton (1990:18) states that quantitative methods provide statistically generalisable patterns, but that these only tap the surface of the meaning of the phenomenon in question. He notes, however, that qualitative data, "add depth, detail, and meaning at a very personal level of experience". This analysis explains succinctly the purpose of the qualitative component of this study, to reveal a deeper understanding of parental involvement as it occurs presently, and as it could occur, in Urban Swazi primary schools. This in-depth understanding of parental involvement, combined with the generalisations that resulted from the quantitative analysis, form a suitable basis for the design of an effective programme of parental involvement.

The results of the qualitative interviews and observations of a small group of urban Swazi primary school teachers and parents are presented in the ensuing sections. Themes that arose from the literature and the analysis of the teacher, focus group, and parent interviews are presented. The original unedited words of the informants are used in all quotes although occasionally a word or phrase was added, or changed in the interests of clarity. Where this has been done, such words are presented in square brackets. Observations of informants' actions are typed in italics and are also in square brackets. Quotes are in bold and are indented. Pseudonyms have been used for all informants to ensure anonymity.

As noted in Chapter 4 it is a considerable challenge to combine qualitative and quantitative results. Nevertheless this chapter will attempt to draw these results together to form a coherent picture of parental involvement in Swaziland. Thus, after the qualitative results are presented they are discussed in terms of both the literature and the quantitative findings of this study (see Chapter 5).

6.2 Parental involvement: Opportunities and possibilities

6.2.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are two determinants of parental involvement (see 2.6). While analyzing the interview data the researcher noted the opportunities that Swazi parents were given to become involved in their children's education, and the efforts made by the schools, teachers and Ministry of Education to involve them. She also observed whether parents took these opportunities to become involved, as well as whether they were involved in their children's education in ways that were not under the control of the teachers, school or Ministry of Education. The teachers' and parents' beliefs on how parents should be involved were also noted.

The data segments that formed the above theme were then sorted into Epstein's six types of parental involvement (Epstein 1995:704) following the frameworks of Chapters 2 and 3.

6.2.2 Parenting

6.2.2.1 *Parents were aware of their basic obligations*

The six parents interviewed showed a keen awareness of the basic obligations of parents to provide the resources, and establish the home conditions, that make education possible.

The parents felt that two of their main responsibilities were ensuring that their child attended a good school and paying school fees. Parents also noted their other traditional parental responsibilities such as supplying school stationery and books and providing physical care for their children.

Ms. Dlamini, a parent whose son attended School D noted:

I think I should make sure they get a good basic education. That is beginning from nursery. They should attend nursery. Then I should always try to get a good school.

Ms. Nxumalo, a parent whose daughter attended School C, stated:

I think a parent has to provide for the child, pay school fees, buy everything at the school and then help the child at home with his schoolwork and also, like now we have some schools that don't provide food. You have to make some balanced meals for them to take. You must see that they get real food.

Parents also acknowledged their role in establishing positive values and in the discipline of their children. Mr. Kunene, a parent whose child attended School C, noted:

[Parents must] also try to instill a sense of discipline; certain values which we believe will help them to be responsible citizens in the future.

The parents were aware that they played an important role in encouraging and advising their children.

Then I should always help them with doing their schoolwork, always encourage them (Ms. Dlamini, parent, School D).

Although they can depend on me for advice and the rest... I need to guide them to a future profession (Mr. Nardu, parent, School C).

However, despite the fact that the parents knew they should encourage and advise their children, the parenting styles (see 2.4.2) they used were not always positive when dealing with educational issues. Mr. Razibuhoro (parent, School D) knew this and stated:

Sometimes when the child does a mistake we say "stupid, stupid". I said to her [my wife] let us try not to tell our children stupid because maybe later on they become stupid.

All of the parents spontaneously and enthusiastically thanked the researcher for holding the workshops, which focussed on parenting style and parental involvement in the home (see Appendix V). The parents noted that attending the workshop had shown them that the way they interacted with their children when helping with schoolwork was not always positive. Many commented that they had improved their parenting as a result of the workshop.

So at least it helped me to some extent. I must really appreciate it. That workshop did work. It made me a better parent because I could see maybe I'm too strict here. I get upset easily when a child is failing to tell me what is 8 times 3. Ja, they start crying, crying all the time and I say [swearing]. So when you [the researcher] start mentioning this its like you knew exactly what is happening (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

The parents tried to supervise their children's home activities.

I said now you [the children] must only watch TV for only 2 hours. Not more than that, because they also like to watch TV all day (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

However, the fact that many parents were at work all day and were not able to supervise their children personally made this difficult.

Sometimes when they come home I am not there. And when I'm not there they find time to go and play (Ms. Nxumalo, parent, School C).

6.2.2.2 Teachers made no attempt to educate parents

All the teachers interviewed emphasised the parents' role in fulfilling their basic obligations. They noted that parents must pay school fees, provide books, feed and clothe their children, be their primary educators, and also provide them with the emotional support, values and discipline they need to learn.

They provide for all the needs of the child that has to do with the learning situation. When you need instruments, they are there, when you need crayons, they are there (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

The parent should teach the child the fear of the Lord, firstly, from my side. The parent should take care of the child, body, soul and spirit (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

However the teachers felt that some parents did not meet these obligations.

In fact the parents are the first teachers of the child. Before they come to us they have already taught them something [values] but if there is nothing then there is very little we can do for the child (Mr. Dladla, teacher, School D).

That's where most of the problems start, if the kids don't get that interest from their parents. Interest in their work, interest in what they are doing at school, interest in their friends (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

I think some of the kids are not getting the support and love from the home (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

In fact, some of the teachers felt that parents did not realise that their role was not limited to only providing the material resources for education. Ms. Dube, a teacher at School D noted in respect to some parents:

When I [the parent] pay the school fees, the child has got a uniform that is fine. The teacher will do the rest.

Very few teachers were happy about the general level of supervision in the children's homes. Children were watching too much, often unsuitable, TV and were being left to do whatever they wanted.

They are not bothered at all if their children watch the TV until the morning hours. So if they could control the watching of TV, that is the main problem I have discovered (Mr. Dladla, teacher, School D).

Most of them [the learners] are spoilt and there is less discipline, there is less discipline than one would expect. Definitely. Children have amazing freedom (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

Nevertheless, despite teachers' awareness that some parents were not fulfilling these important obligations, none of the schools ever held parent workshops in which parents' responsibilities and positive parenting behaviours were discussed. The surprised response of Mr. Fortune, a teacher at School B, when asked whether the school provided such workshops was typical. Laughing and shaking his head, he replied:

No, not at all, not at all.

Only Ms. Costa, whose daughter had attended a school in the USA, had ever even heard of such workshops for parents. The only workshops held at the government aided schools were in-service workshops for teachers on continuous assessment, while Private School A occasionally held workshops for staff on how to handle children with various learning problems.

The researcher during the course of this study (see 4.2.8) gave a workshop at Schools C and D. These workshops were poorly attended with only 10% of the parents, and teachers, attending.

6.2.2.3 Discussion

The parents interviewed were aware of their basic obligations and tried to meet them. Teachers felt that most parents met their children's material needs. However, although research suggests that almost all parents accept their basic responsibilities (Epstein 1986:281), the teachers interviewed were concerned that some parents were not providing their children with the values and discipline required for successful learning. Further, teachers did not feel that most parents supervised their children adequately.

The parents interviewed reported that although they tried, they found it difficult to supervise their children's afternoon activities since they were usually working at this time. This sometimes resulted in parents helping and supervising their

children's homework at night when both were exhausted (see 6.2.5.2). The contention that the children were not always well supervised is supported by the finding that just over 40% of the parents in the quantitative research reported that they did not limit the amount of time that their children watched TV on a frequent basis (Item 35, Table 5.29).

The parents interviewed proved to be some of the more involved parents (see 6.2.8.1). Thus it is likely that they were also the parents that were most aware of the nature of a positive parenting style. Nevertheless, even these parents benefited from the workshop and made changes in their parenting style as a result.

Consequently, despite an apparent need for parent education on parenting styles and supervision that was recognised both by teachers and parents, none of these schools, or the teachers themselves, made any effort to educate parents in these respects.

6.2.3 Communication

6.2.3.1 *Teachers and parents recognised the need for communication*

Both parents and teachers felt that communication between the school and the home was essential. Teachers placed emphasis on the parents making the effort to communicate with them.

The parent, if he sees something, he must quickly communicate with the teacher, immediately. There should be open communication between the teacher and the parent as the centre point is the child (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

The perfect parent is one that has very close contact with the teacher, yes, actually keeps in line with the progress the child is making. The occasional

visits to school, have a chat with the teacher, the visits on open-day (Mr. Nkuni, teacher, School C).

There must be that communication between the teacher and the parent. Its not like it's the teacher faced with the kid and that's it. We are also involved (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D)

The parents felt that they were welcome at the school and that they could approach teachers whenever they needed to talk to them. For this reason several parents noted that they did not feel teacher-parent meetings needed to occur more than once a term.

Because I think the teachers have got time to talk to the parents. I think that if the parents want to talk to the teacher, I don't think they will mind (Mr. Razibuhoro, parent, School D).

If I feel there is something I need I always go there [the school] (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

It is okay to meet the teacher once a term because if I have a problem or my child has a problem I can always go and meet them. (Ms. Dlamini, parent, School D).

Most teachers indicated that the school had an open door policy and welcomed spontaneous visits from parents although a few teachers expressed reservations in this regard.

We always encourage them to come anytime, anytime they want to discuss [something]. And they come, but sometimes they interrupt classes, which is a problem (Ms. Wade, head-teacher, School C).

6.2.3.2 Communication mostly by notices from the school

A great deal of communication between the school and home took the form of notices, which were usually sent to parents at least weekly either requesting

help, materials or money from parents or informing parents of events at the school. These notices were all sent in English, which the teachers felt the parents expected because they had chosen these schools based on the fact that they taught in English.

I think because its Swaziland and the children speak a lot of siSwati at home they [parents] like to put their children in an English school so that when they go to South Africa they can speak English fluently. I think that's partly why they put their children here (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

The teachers' felt that parents read these notes and that most responded positively to requests for materials.

You'll send out letters and you'll get the letters back, they [the parents] are very good at replying. You get that communication going (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

Mr. Nyoni, a teacher at School E, noted that parents did not respond to requests from the schools, if they did not get notices. A few teachers also communicated to parents in writing by means of homework diaries or communication books but the majority of teachers did not use these forms of communication.

Parent workshops and home visits by the teachers to parents did not occur at any of these schools. Most teachers did not realise that it was possible to do these things. Mr. Fortune, a teacher at School B, realised the benefits of home visits but thought it was his novel idea and was not aware that this was practiced at any schools.

I thought it was a bit of a wild idea but I never had the chance to sit down and propose it.

Although most contact between parents and teachers was in writing or in person, one parent expressed great satisfaction over his frequent contact with his child's teachers by telephone.

I've had a good relationship with them [the teachers]. Particularly his class teacher because I also have his phone number. If I feel there is a need to speak to him I speak to him on the telephone (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C).

6.2.3.3 Reasons for communicating

a) Teachers wished to communicate learners' problems and progress, and parents' duties

As mentioned in 6.2.3.2, notices were sent frequently to inform the parents of events at the school and to request resources from parents.

Teachers also felt it was important to communicate children's progress to parents, which was mostly done at parent-teacher meetings and also to inform parents of any problems concerning their children. If such problems arose parents were usually asked to visit the school. The teachers reported that most parents responded promptly when asked to visit the school.

The parents here are very much cooperative, because for instance in my class $\frac{3}{4}$ of them are very much responsible because once I discover something [a problem] then I quickly make a note, they [the parents] respond either they come or they phone and we make an appointment. Maybe the $\frac{1}{4}$, you know we have to keep on sending "please call your parent" (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

While most teachers said they would welcome more frequent visits from any parents, they felt that they particularly needed to see those parents whose children were having problems; but these were also the parents that were the hardest to see.

You see, so I mean, and often it is the wrong parents [who attend meetings]. The kids are doing fine, there are no hassles and they are doing great. So the ones you really want to see, I'll be lucky if I get two or three (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

These schools also told parents what duties and roles the school expected of them.

Once a year we hold a curriculum review. We explain to the parents what we are doing here and what their role is. It will work if they do their part that we are expecting, sort of. You have to know as a school that there is a certain amount that the parent puts in to be able to say at the end of the day that we did a good job (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

Last year I attended two meetings. We were told about the children's progress in school, how we should help, sort of, cooperate with the school (Ms. Nxumalo, parent, School C).

Teachers felt that communication from the home was particularly important when the children were having problems at home.

[Quoting a parent] "We have a problem at home, I am leaving my husband and my child is not taking it well so could you [the teacher] lookout". It helps a lot because you can actually see the slump and you think, what can I do? (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

However, only one teacher noted that parents had access to information about the children themselves, which was valuable to teachers.

Whereby if the parent had made you aware of the child's [academic] problem, work would have started earlier (Mr. Nyoni, teacher, School E).

Although the schools showed the parents their children's books at the yearly parent-teacher meetings, no deliberate effort was made by any of the schools to inform the parents about the teaching methods or the topics their children were learning about at school on a weekly or even monthly basis. Only private School A held a single yearly meeting, the curriculum review, in which the year's syllabus and the parent's role were communicated. The researcher attended this short meeting. The skills the children were supposed to learn during the year were superficially listed on overheads and parents were told that they should

ensure that their children did their homework. The teachers expected parents to approach teachers and ask for this information or look at their children's schoolbooks if they were interested.

In response to the question of whether parents were informed about the topics taught, Mr. Fakudze, a teacher at School E, responded:

No we don't, we don't. Let me be open, we don't. All we do is request [at the annual teacher-parent meeting] them to look at the work of the child so he will know what topic he has been doing. There is the date, topic and everything. So he will know, this week they are doing this. Otherwise there is no special notices that says we are doing this topic this week.

b) Parents' wanted to know about their children's problems and progress

Resolution of problems and determining their children's progress were also the reasons given most often by parents for them contacting the teachers:

So from time to time he [the class teacher] phones me if there is a problem. So from time to time I do phone the teacher to find out the progress (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C).

I always go to school and inquire from the teacher how he is [the child]. And especially he is not good at maths so I would go to the school and ask, "how can I help? How can you [the teacher] help?" and they would always assist me (Ms. Dlamini, parent, School D).

6.2.3.4 Discussion

Unlike some foreign parents who feel like intruders on the school grounds (Eldridge 2001:66), the parents interviewed here felt welcome at the school and felt they could approach the teachers to talk whenever they needed to. The teachers also welcomed parents coming to the school to communicate with them. This corresponds with the quantitative data (see 5.6.1) which also showed

that parents felt welcome at the school and had a very positive attitude to the school. This should facilitate home to school communication.

Nevertheless, the quantitative data (see 5.7.2) indicate that the majority of the parents did not visit the school more than once a year. Further, as is the case in some foreign schools, most parents did not talk to the teacher frequently, and 40% of the parents had had no verbal communication with the teacher that year (Item 28, Table 5.31). Since only the more involved parents were interviewed (see 6.2.8.1) this finding does not conflict with these parents' recognition of the importance of home to school communication, but does indicate that a substantial proportion of the parent population did not seem to be aware of this.

The teachers noted that the parents responded well to notes, which were clearly the predominant form of communication at these schools. This was substantiated by the high return rate of the parental questionnaire (see 4.2.4.2). This suggests that the use of English as the language of communication by the school did not form a barrier to the involvement of most parents. This was supported by the quantitative findings, which found that siSwati-speaking parents were as involved as English-speaking parents (see 5.5.3).

Parents emphasised communication over the problems and progress of their children, and clearly felt it their role to help remove problems. None of the parents mentioned a role in giving teachers information about their children.

The interviews indicated that these teachers recognised the need for communication in both directions, from school to home and home to school. However, although the teachers wanted parents to communicate with them, teachers felt that parents should take the initiative to approach them. Moreover, although the teachers recognised that parents had important information about the children's home circumstances, with only one exception, they did not seem

to realise that parents had useful information about their children. Hence, teachers did not emphasise communication with parents as a way of finding out about learners. This finding is supported by the quantitative data (Item 47, Table 5.34), which showed that over 60% of parents felt the school did not ask them for information about their child or “could do this much better.”

The teachers also did not seem to realise that listening to parents could be of benefit to the children’s education since schools and teachers only deliberately invited communication from the parents when problems existed. The quantitative data indicate the resultant emphasis at these schools on school to home communication, as is also the case in many foreign schools (see 5.8.1 & 5.8.2). Although, routine vehicles for frequent two-way communication are essential to establishment of partnerships between parents and schools (Weiss & Edwards 1992:216; Bhering 2002:236), the teachers and schools provided parents with very few formal opportunities for home to school communication despite professing a desire for such communication. The vast majority of teachers did not use communication books and parents were only invited to come and talk to teachers at the annual parent-teacher meetings.

The quantitative (see 5.8.1) and qualitative data show that parents were sent a great many notices informing them of events occurring at the schools, and of resources required by the schools. Schools also sought to communicate their agendas and expectations to parents. The implication is that parental involvement was about obtaining parental support for the schools and getting parents to adopt the schools’ values and goals. This attitude is common in many schools (Crozier 1999:113; Edwards & Warin 1999:331-335).

None of the teachers or parents ever mentioned that the teacher should or did contact parents just to inform them of positive things. In fact, teachers made it clear that they felt they did not really need to see parents unless the child was

having problems. This is in accordance with research in other countries, which has indicated that few teachers want more contact with parents of children without problems (Dornbusch & Ritter 1988:76). Thus, it is almost surprising that the quantitative data indicated that only 40% of parents felt they were only contacted for problems (see Item 14, Table 5.27). However, this can be explained by the fact that even though the teachers themselves felt they only really needed to see parents whose children were having problems (see also 6.2.4.1), all parents received reports and were invited to parent-teacher meetings. These were the main forums for communicating information about individual children at these schools.

The teachers were happy for parents to come and find out about the topics being taught at school but, with the exception of School A, which did this only annually and superficially, did not deliberately make parents aware of the topics being taught or the methods being used. This corresponds with the quantitative data which showed that nearly 60% of parents felt the school either did not or "could do much better" tell them the skills their children needed to learn that year (Item 38, Table 5.34). The fact that 23% of the parents felt the schools did this fairly well suggests that at least some teachers may have been communicating this information albeit, possibly, superficially. However, the majority of teachers were not doing so.

6.2.4 Parental involvement at the school

The interviews indicated that parents were afforded limited opportunities to become involved at the school.

6.2.4.1 *Parent-teacher meetings, important but infrequent*

Teachers from all schools noted proudly that their schools held parent-teacher meetings, which they believed, were very important.

It is very important that parents come to the school. In fact what we do here is once a year we have an open day when we sit down with the parents and we look at the work of the child and discuss and see if there are some problems. We see what we can do in order to help. So there is that kind of working together with the parents (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

These annual events were mainly held to inform parents of their children's progress and to address problems that the children may have been having at school. In addition, these meetings clearly improved parent-teacher relationships. Parents appreciated the opportunity these meetings gave them to access their children's progress and behaviour at school.

They put all the books on the table and you go through them, the exercises that he does, the tests that he has done. At least you think the school is doing a good job in that regard because you are able to pick up what the child is doing before you even get the report. At least you can go there with your child, then you can hear he is playful, at the very least you can see how your child is doing (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

All parents interviewed reported that these meetings were important and that either they or their spouse attended the parent-teacher meetings, usually not both.

I believe that it is critical in fact, not only important, but critical in fact that parents attend such gatherings (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C).

In most cases I go [to the meetings]. Its only maybe when I'm not in a position to go I ask my wife (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

The teachers at Schools B, C, D and E felt parent-teacher meetings were well attended. School D was willing to arrange an alternative time to meet parents if they were not able to come on the specified day.

Yes, they do come and those that cannot come on a particular day, then they come earlier or later but they all attend because it is very important. In my class I had 99%, only one parent who didn't come (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

From what I have observed about 80% [of parents] are interested to know about their kids. But about 20% are not. Even if you make a tremendous effort to call them they don't come. They don't even bother themselves (Mr. Mduli, teacher, School C).

A number of teachers reported that parents commonly sent another family representative to the meeting when they could not go.

You find some parents often send a sister or a grandmother, but we try to discourage that (Ms. Makuba, deputy, School D).

The teachers at School A felt, that almost half the parents did not attend these meetings.

Teachers felt that those parents whose children were having the most problems were those that did not attend. These were the parents they particularly wanted to see.

I think a lot of the time we see the parents we don't really need to see, of course we love to see them, but the parents we really would like to see are the parents that are so elusive (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

Some don't come at all, usually the ones we need to see the most are the one's that don't come (Ms. Wade, head-teacher, School C).

The teachers and parents agreed that one parent-teacher meeting per year was insufficient and that these meetings should occur far more often, at least once a term.

I think that one is not enough, I would say, because if they come once then I don't think that it will be enough because problems come every day so then I

believe that they have to come everyday if they get time (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

They should change how the school is calling upon the meeting because the meeting is only once a year, so what I think the school could do is to make sure that every term there is a parent-teacher day (Mr. Razibuhoro, parent, School D).

The necessity for more frequent teacher-parent meetings is illustrated by an incident related by Mr. Nyoni, a teacher at School E:

We have open days every year during the first term and this year we somehow had two open days because there was the time when we had the first official one after which at the beginning of the [next] term they [parents] were made to come and collect their kids reports and it became an open day even though it was not planned because as soon as they looked at their kids' reports they started discussing and it became an open day coincidentally.

Discussion

Parent-teacher evenings were valued by both teachers and parents interviewed. Teachers reported that these were well attended at Schools B, C, D and E, but not at School A. However, the parents' responses to the questionnaire indicate that although most parents felt they had been invited to these events "very well", only a third had attended these meetings that year (see 5.8.3). This figure, which is considerably lower than that found in a study in the USA (Epstein 1986:281) but higher than that found by in South Africa (Heystek 1999:104), suggests that a large proportion of parents did not attend parent-teacher meetings. This conflicts with the teachers' perception of good attendance.

This difference between the perception of teachers and parents is hard to explain, especially since neither response flatters those giving it. The most likely explanation is that a substantial number of parents may have sent another family representative in their stead. Alternatively, teachers who were not interviewed may have experienced lower attendance at these events. However as all

teachers were referring to school-wide attendance this seems a less likely explanation. Nevertheless, although the teachers and parents interviewed, recognised the opportunities these meetings provided for communication and problem solving, apparently many other parents did not.

The interview data suggest a need for more frequent parent-teacher meetings. This may also encourage higher attendance by providing parents with more flexibility. This may be particularly important in the case of the parents whose children have problems. Teachers in this study, like those in many others (Ascher 1988:110), noted that these parents were also those least likely to attend. Although parents and teachers did not seem to be fully cognizant of this, their remarks indicated that these meetings also improved teacher-parent relationships. These meeting brought teachers and parents closer together and promoted mutual understanding.

6.2.4.2 Parents were involved in fundraising on the rare occasions they were given the opportunity

Fundraising events were held at most of the schools. These took the form of donations from parents, civvies days, cake sales, raffles, forms from the school asking for money that parents took to their employers, fun-nights, and family days. However, with the exception of private School A, which held many fundraising events, the other schools often held no more than one event per year. Frequently, parents were not involved at all.

In reply to whether the school held fundraising activities Mr. Nkunita, a teacher at School C, said:

We've never had one [a fundraiser] actually.

Mr. Fukudze, a teacher at School E, stated:

This year we did not have one but we used to have them, like we used to say to child, maybe on Friday, must put on their private clothes and then pay one Lilangeni. We do have some like that but not often, they only involve the pupils and teachers.

Ms. Dube, a teacher at School D, reported:

[We usually have fundraisers] one time per year, but it depends whether that year has been a very busy year. We see that we are so tired maybe we can do it next year.

Both teachers and parents reported that the parents enthusiastically took part in fundraising activities when given the opportunity to do so. Questioning revealed that this involvement was not only paying money or attending the fundraiser, but also included some parents managing and organising fundraisers. The teachers were very enthusiastic about the fundraising events that had taken place and had clearly enjoyed them.

They [parents] do donate as long as they are informed and they see the good cause of why that is done (Mr. Nyoni, teacher, School E).

They came, we had one [a fundraiser] in the previous term, in the 2nd term. We had a fun night. We had a beautiful turnout. The parents are always ready to help the braaing here and arranging. They are very supportive (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

They do have a cake sale, if they want to collect money to do something like the library they will always ask the parents what should be done and the parents will come up with ideas. Its quite good (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

The teachers at School A, the only school to hold many fundraising events each year noted that while most parents were willing to give their money towards

fundraisers, only the same small group of parents actually took part in managing or organising fundraisers.

The parents that are involved are involved [in managing and organising fundraisers] pretty good but it's a very low percentage, maybe 10 to 15% (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

They do give money or they drop the child at the function, but in-terms of offering assistance it actually ends up that each class has a core group of three to five parents that actually carryout whatever fundraising. They are the ones who will offer, it doesn't matter what function we are doing (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

Discussion

Fundraising is a traditional way in which parents are involved at most schools (Jantjes 1995:300). However, to the researcher's surprise, parents were hardly used as resources for fundraising in any school except School A. Fundraising events were very rare, often being held less than once a year and parents were often not invited to contribute. Teachers reported that when fundraisers were held, parents attended them and, when they were given the opportunity, they also helped manage and organise them. The low frequency with which these events were held at the schools explains why Item 33 was reassigned to SIPI rather than PIPI (see 5.8.3). Simply put, parent involvement in fundraising was limited, primarily, by a lack of opportunities for them to be involved rather than by parental choice. Parents seemed to enjoy attending these events. In fact, considering how infrequently teachers reported having invited parents to fundraise, it is surprising that as many as 36% of the parents said they had helped with fundraising many times that year (see Item 33, Table 5.35). This difference in perception may be because teachers seemed to define fundraising in terms of specific events while the parents defined any request by the school for money as fundraising. Nevertheless, both the qualitative and quantitative (see 5.8.3) results support the contention that parents would fundraise if asked

to do so by the school. Possibly, however, only a small percentage of parents would be intensively involved in the organisation and management of these activities if they were held frequently as was the case at School A.

6.2.4.3 Parents attended the infrequent sports, social and cultural events

Like fundraising, parents, with the exception of those whose children attended private School A, had very little opportunity to take part in or attend sporting or social events due to the infrequency of these events.

At all the schools except School A, social events occurred no more than once a year and were often combined with fundraising events. Sport was limited to an annual athletics day. Cultural events were even more infrequent. However, these events were well attended by parents at all schools when they did occur.

We haven't had a situation whereby we have competed with another school. School A usually does that, when they normally invite another private school and they have three [schools] and they have a sports day and the parents come through. No we don't have that. We have our annual sports day where we focus on athletics. We have a whole day programme and then the parents come through for that, they certainly do (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

Parents do come for the sports, but we did not have a sports day this year (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

...and obviously anything that involves the children on stage, then you definitely have support, definitely (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

When asked about these events specifically, most parents felt that they should attend to encourage their children.

They [parents] should always encourage their children [at sporting events] and try to provide them with sports gear so their children can be encouraged to play (Ms. Dlamini, parent, School D).

I know its not nice, like if the child is performing in a play at school and his own parents are not there, it is painful (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

This was also the reason given by teachers for why parents attended.

They come [parents] because they would like to cheer their kids (Mr. Nyoni, teacher, School E).

The parents did not always take the few opportunities they had to be involved in organising these events. Ms. Wade the head-teacher at School C remarked:

Also, just recently, I put out a newsletter asking parents to help us assemble props and crafts for a play that we are doing. No response, not one.

Most parents seemed to accept that the school their child attended offered very few sporting opportunities. They did not complain about the infrequency of social and cultural events. In reply to the question of whether he felt there was enough sports at School C, Mr. Kunene, a parent, said calmly:

Well that's another area because there are no facilities especially at that school.

Only Mr. Nardu, a parent at School C seemed to fully appreciate the benefits to the child of parents attending school events:

I think its good because it sort of gives us another perspective apart from reading and writing. I never used to attend the school prize day and actually this boy gets so worked up and disappointed. But the day I went to the prize giving day, that made me change my mind completely about actually my presence in the school is very important for them it gives them a lot of encouragement. It shows that you actually care for them. I don't know if its actually caring or maybe they actually feel "now people actually know who my dad is" but it helps a lot. I saw a big change. He was more confident and, in fact, I think his performance also rose. From that time I decided, in any meeting, unless I've got a very good reason I would attend.

Teachers at School A, which held many sports, social, and cultural events noted, that only a small group of parents helped with the actual event but that the events were well attended if they were held outside of working hours.

During the weekend when we have sports festivals the parents attend, during the week, very little [parental attendance occurs] (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

Parents at School A who the school considered to be adequately skilled were given the opportunity to coach sports. While he had observed parents coach successfully, Mr. Reed, a teacher at School A, had some reservations about parents assuming this role:

The biggest problem is that knowing the information and being able to convey it is a different ball game. I've seen that often when I've had top sports men come in and try and run a coaching session and it would be an absolute disaster.

Mr. Reed went on to point out that most parents do not have time to coach sports at the school.

Discussion

Teachers reported that sport, social and cultural events were well attended. The parents interviewed attended these events because they recognised that their attendance encouraged their children. The animated responses of parents and teachers when discussing these events also suggested that they enjoyed them.

The quantitative findings revealed very low levels of parental attendance, similar to those found in a South African study (Heystek 1999:104), at sports, cultural and social events. However, the questionnaire items that dealt with sports, cultural and social events were reassigned by factor analysis from PIPI to SIPI (see 5.8.3). This suggested that the low levels of attendance at these events may have been because parents were unable to attend largely because the schools were holding these events so infrequently (see 5.8.3). The interviews

indicated that these events were, in fact, held only very rarely, and sometimes not even annually at most of the schools. Since School A only made up a tiny proportion of the quantitative sample (see Table 4.2), the effect of these more frequent events at this school is likely to be hidden. It is particularly sad that these events were generally held so infrequently, since the teachers reported that they were well attended.

Although parents attended these events, aside from Mr. Nardu, the parents interviewed did not fully realise how important their involvement at these events was. They were not aware that research has shown parental attendance at these types of events can improve children's academic results (see 2.4.4). Parents did not include attendance at these events in the description of their role as a parent and did not complain that they were given almost no opportunity to attend.

Parents also helped organise and manage these events when invited to do so by the schools. School A was the only school that complained that only a small group of parents were involved this way. This may have been due to these events being held so much more frequently at this school thus, placing a greater demand on parents' time.

The infrequency of these events at most of the schools suggests that the teachers and schools, with the exception of School A, did not realise the importance of holding social, cultural and sports events for the development of the child. They also did not seem to appreciate the excellent opportunity such events give teachers and parents to get to know each other under relaxed conditions. Further, none of the teachers interviewed mentioned parent attendance or involvement in the organisation and management of school cultural, social or sports events when describing the role of parents. This suggests that teachers did not fully appreciate the importance of parental involvement in these areas. Only School A made use of parent coaches.

6.2.4.4 *Parents contributed to educational trips if invited to*

All the schools held annual educational trips where they would take a grade of learners to visit museums and other educational venues either inside or out of Swaziland for several days. At all schools parents were willing to pay money for their children to go on these excursions. At some of the schools parents also helped organise, and went on, these trips. Ms. Crawford, a teacher at School A, when asked if parents attended these trips replied, sighing:

It's the same people, with everything.

At School D the parent body chose parents to act on an organising committee for school trips. The teachers at School E reported that parents helped organise trips and went on them, if invited to do so by the teachers.

If we invite them to help us they do come but if then we don't, then they just leave everything to us. All they do is send the money with the child to the school. We decide what place, when and how. Everything is planned by the school. But if we invite them they are willing to come and help. I remember one time when we went to Botswana we had parents who had relatives in Botswana. They helped us to plan our accommodation and places to visit and so forth because we as teachers did not know the place. But because of these parents we managed to plan the trip well (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

Mr. Nyoni, School E, remarked:

My past experience has taught me that parents at School E are very much cooperative as long as you take the initiative to involve them.

At Schools B and C parents were not invited to either help organise or attend educational trips.

Discussion

Parents of children at all the schools were willing to pay for school trips. However, unless invited to do more, this is where their contribution ceased.

Often, parents were not invited to be involved in field trips. When they were invited to help plan, organise, and attend these trips they did so.

6.2.4.5 *Volunteering at the school was unknown*

Parents at these schools were not invited to volunteer in the classroom, tuck-shop, playground, library or any other school venue during school hours.

School C did make an attempt to involve parents in career guidance at the school.

At one point we tried to develop a parental skills bank when we questioned parents about what work they did and would they come in and talk to the students about their life's work and absolutely no one responded (Ms. Wade, head-teacher, School C).

The other schools had not thought of involving parents as guest speakers but were enthusiastic about involving educated parents this way. Schools A and D did involve other members of the community this way.

Most of the teachers had never heard of parents volunteering to help in the classroom but, to the researcher's surprise, many were very enthusiastic about this possibility and, immediately, realised some of the ways they and the children would benefit. When asked how he would feel about parents helping in the classroom, Mr. Fortune, a teacher at School B, replied:

Wow [hits desk with fist], that would be nice. I've never even thought of that. You know I think a little bit in our society, its always seen as the teachers duty and finished, but, wow, that's an interesting concept. I think that would be nice. I think that would reinforce relationships.

Mr. Nkunita, a teacher at School C, responded:

That would be very good. For one it would be a welcome change in the normal activity of the class and some [parents] actually do certain jobs that perhaps they would furnish us with information that we need in class. They could contribute to a lesson. It's a very welcome change.

Ms. Malaza, a teacher at School D, replied:

Its really good, its good for the lower grades because the way we have our reading at School D, actually, it needs parents to help with the reading because they have got 24 books which means that it is impossible for the teacher to teach when there are so many numbers. So usually you have to group them. I've taught the lower grades so I know the constraints. You've got to group them and you find, per day, that maybe 10 are reading and you find you have got to take one page per child and there are other subjects waiting. So we need much parents participation in reading.

Some of the teachers, however, were concerned that parent volunteers may be disruptive under certain conditions and that not all parents were skilled enough to help in the classroom.

I'm always open to it [parents helping in the classroom], the only thing is I think it must be consistent. We have had parents come forward and there are parents who are willing to assist but for it to be really effective and for it not to be disruptive, you introduce the person and they are there for at least a term (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

School A dealt with these teacher concerns by hiring teacher assistants from the parent community whom they felt were adequately skilled.

...and they [teaching assistants] get a bit of money. But its more that, but its not just "you can help so come and help", its to ensure that we are actually on the right track and that the person is qualified to do so. We've never really pursued it much further beyond that (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

The teachers felt that, while work commitments would prevent most parents from volunteering in the classroom, a few parents or other relatives would be willing to do so.

You may find some of them are busy, they don't have time to help the kids [by volunteering at school]. Each parent if she is available [would volunteer], I don't think it would be a problem for them. If it were my child I'd be very eager to come along. You may find some of them may have a relative to come and help. That I would also appreciate. It is not necessary that it be a parent. Somebody responsible could help (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

The parents felt that work commitments would make volunteering at the school difficult for them but almost all were willing to talk at the school about their career and come in occasionally. Mr. Kunene, a parent whose child attended School C, felt work commitments would make volunteering at the school impossible for him and his wife. Ms. Nxumalo, a parent whose child attended School C, was considering offering to teach traditional dancing at School C.

I want to introduce traditional dance, I just haven't made up my mind how to do it.

Discussion

As is the case in South Africa (see 5.8.2), these Swazi parents were given no opportunity to volunteer at the school. No structures or planning existed to accommodate this except at School A where teachers held a very limited concept of the parent as volunteers and could only envisage parents as paid full-time classroom assistants. The quantitative data showed that only 11.5 % (see Item 41, Table 5.34) of the parents felt that the school asked them to volunteer at the school for a few hours, "very well". These positive replies were probably due to confusion about what was meant by volunteering since the interviews showed clearly that none of the schools asked the parents to volunteer at all. This finding is supported by the responses of the vast majority of parents, 80%, who reported that the school did not ask them to volunteer at the school at all or "could do this much better" (Item 41, Table 5.34).

Teachers were not aware of the other roles parents can play at schools. The teachers at School A were neither positive nor enthusiastic about parent volunteers, as was also found by Tichenor (1998:252). However, the teachers at the other schools were very enthusiastic about parent volunteers and welcomed help from any family member. They were also excited about educated parents giving presentations and tutorials at the school. The teachers felt, however, as was noted in a study by Epstein (1987b:5), that work commitments may prevent

most parents from volunteering. These teachers, unlike those in other studies (Newport 1992:49-50), did not express any concern about being, interfered with, observed or judged by parents. These teachers may be particularly confident or perhaps had not had time to think of this due to the novelty of the idea. Although, teachers generally felt that any parent could contribute, they were particularly keen on educated parents volunteering and felt these parents should work under their direction.

Parents were also concerned about work commitments but most felt they could at spend at least a few hours or days at the school a year and one parent wanted to volunteer to teach at the school. Since these highly involved parents (see 6.2.8.1) were concerned about the amount of time this type of involvement would require during work hours, it is likely that only a very small number of parents would volunteer at the school. Epstein (1987a:125) found that only about 4% of parents she studied were highly active at the school. However even one parent volunteer per class would make a big difference to the teachers at Schools C, D and E who teach very large classes.

6.2.4.6 *Summary*

Opportunities for parental involvement at Schools B, C, D and E were extremely limited and infrequent. Parents could, and did, attend sports, social, cultural and fundraising events. However, these events were held annually or not at all which greatly limited parental involvement in these areas. Parents were rarely asked to help plan or attend educational trips and were never asked to volunteer in the classrooms.

Parent-teacher meetings were also only held annually. Parents and teachers interviewed recognised the importance of parent-teacher meetings and felt these should be more frequent. Although the parents interviewed attended these meetings, most parents did not. These parents may have sent other relatives in

their stead. Further, parents did not always take the opportunities they were given to help organise and manage events.

Most parents and teachers did not seem to fully appreciate the importance and advantages of parental involvement at the school. The importance of a well-developed non-academic component to children's education was also not realised by teachers at these schools.

Contrary to foreign research findings (see 2.4.4), however, teachers welcomed the novel idea of parents as volunteers in the classroom and other school venues. While work constraints may make it difficult for most parents to volunteer, a small proportion would probably do so.

6.2.5 Learning activities in the home

6.2.5.1 *Parents conducted home discussions*

Parents and teachers were aware of the importance of home discussion although parents were given no advice by the teachers or schools in this respect.

I think the perfect parent will take the time to talk to the child and ask them the questions [about their school experience] that will give them the information they need (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

Ms. Mazibuko, a teacher at School C, noted:

You can see that they [the children] talk about what they learn about with their parents and their parents provide information on those topics.

6.2.5.2 *Involvement in homework was prioritised*

Parents were strongly aware of their role in both supervising and helping with homework. Every parent mentioned this role early in their descriptions of their role. All the parents reported that either one or both parents spent as much time

as was necessary helping their children with homework. One parent defined the role of a parent in terms of whether they helped with and supervised homework.

The work at home must be done by the child and helped by the parent. That is how I do understand it. So as a parent I have to make sure the homework has been done and if there is any problem I have to contribute. It is really sometimes a shame to hear that the child has not done his homework and if my child goes to school without doing his homework then I'm not supposed to be called his parent. You cannot know the weaknesses of your child if you don't follow and you don't help him in the homework exercises (Mr. Razibuhoro, parent, School D).

I try by all means that we finish the homework, whether [or not] it is long. At times it lasts for an hour or so if it's a long one (Ms. Dlamini, parent, school D).

Some of the parents required their children to do their homework at a specific time while others allowed their children to do their homework whenever it suited the child.

Normally I require him to do his homework as soon as he comes back from school. Normally he does it by about 18h00 (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C).

She wants to go and play. At night when everything is finished she starts doing the work and then I have to stay up to help her (Ms. Nxumalo, parent, School C).

Teachers also emphasised a role for parents in homework. Most teachers felt parents should help with and supervise homework.

I think the parent has to see to it that everything the child is assigned both at home and at school, he does it. He must see to it that the child does his or her work efficiently and give help where possible (Mr. Nyoni, teacher, School E).

These teachers were confident in the parent's ability to help the child at home.

So then when they [the learners] are given work to do at home I expect the parent to put a hand to help them because the parents are educated so they can be able to help them (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

Mr. Fakudze gave his learners homework despite the policy of School E that all schoolwork should be completed at the school.

A few teachers felt that parents should only supervise homework and not actually help their children with it because they did not always know how to help their children.

I had an example of a parent [whose child is] in Grade 6 who is an engineer with a company and he had gone and marked some maths and marked it correct when it was actually incorrect. So I actually prefer the parents not to get involved with the actual teaching of it unless you are sure they understand the process (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

It better if parents just monitor the homework. The problem is, these parents tend just to give the children answers instead of guiding them through the question. They just give the answers and you find the answers are even higher than the child's level (Ms. Mazibuko, teacher, School C).

Mr. Nkunita, a teacher at School C noted:

I think it is very important to teach the parents how to handle the kids when it comes to homework. I had a very interesting parent last year who said, "The way I help my child to do homework is to ask the child what we know about the subject and let him teach me". It was always a challenge for the child to teach the father and he found in most cases the child would do the right thing and then at the end of it all he would sign. So the various ways for how to monitor the homework would be very important for the parents.

However, despite this observation and even though some teachers felt that parents did not always have the skills required to help their children, none of the teachers or schools actually taught parents general skills for helping with homework or even provided guidelines for specific homework assignments.

Ms. Dlamini expressed the frustration that parents can feel as a result of not knowing how to help their children. She noted that parents often end up doing their children's homework for them when they do not know how to help them.

No, I don't enjoy doing the homework with my child because some of the teachers will just send the child with a pack of homework, not even explaining to them how to go about that homework. It's very frustrating. I think the instructions for homework should be clear, at least the child should know what is happening. So at least when you ask him or her "How did the teacher say we should go about doing this?" , she should be able to tell you a little bit. Otherwise you end up doing the homework for that child and at the end of the day she doesn't end up knowing anything.

Aside from not always knowing how to approach the homework task itself, parents did not always approach home learning with their children in a positive manner.

I was like that too [before the workshop] I easily get angry and upset especially when I ask what is 9X3 and the child struggles (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

Most teachers, however, were enthusiastic about parents approaching them to find out how to help, preferably by using the same methods as those used by the teacher in class.

If ever they want to help the kids [with homework] they can contact the teacher and find how things can be solved so then they can apply the same method to the kids so that the child is able to follow in the same way. I would be very much happy if they [parents] came (Ms. Bhembe, teacher, School D).

In terms of homework supervision most of the schools gave only general, superficial advice.

We always, when we have an open-day, advise the parents that they need to give the child some time to play, some time to watch TV, some time to study. So it's a matter of making a time-table (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

Only School D had a policy that required all parents to sign the learners' homework or homework diaries, although Ms. Dube, a teacher at this school, was not sure whether all the teachers at this school followed this policy.

Yes, they sign. I cannot say for every class, but with mine they sign (Ms. Dube, School D).

At the other schools some teachers required parents to sign their children's homework or homework diaries, while others did not even though many of these teachers recognised the benefits of this practice.

We haven't instructed them to do it [sign homework], but that is something good. I had to sign everyday when my child attended the other school (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

Teachers, often from the same school, differed widely in their opinions of whether parents were, in-fact, helping with and supervising homework. Some teachers felt that very few parents were actually supervising or helping their children with their homework or projects.

Most of the parents in my class, most of the children's projects, if I don't do it here at school its not done properly. With wildlife now, only one parent sent me those pictures, which I appreciated. You'll get a few of them [children] very eager, very eager to want to bring what they brought, what they did at home. [But] when I found out there was more [children] not having their projects I decided we would do it together as a class (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

Other teachers felt that parents were generally fulfilling their homework supervisory role properly, but that the parents were not really helping their children with their homework much. All of the teachers who were satisfied with the parents' performance of their supervisory role were those that insisted that parents sign the homework or homework diary.

In my class I actually insist on the parents signing the pupils' book after every piece of homework and looking at things I'd say 75% of them actually sign. One thing I've come to note is a lot of parents actually like their children to have homework but I don't think they are very comfortable to actually sit down with their kids and do the work (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C.)

Other teachers felt that most parents both supervised their children's homework and helped with it.

I would say 90% of the parents really try to help, mostly they stick to the confines of the approach already taken by the teacher (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

Teachers noted that a small proportion of the parents neither supervised nor helped with their children's homework.

Most are very cooperative, but I must say that is not everybody. Some are not cooperative. You find that the child is supposed to have done written work at home. In the morning when you check, there is nothing. No work (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

6.2.5.3 *Very limited home involvement in other ways*

Several of the schools asked parents to help their children in the lower grades learn to read.

Especially in the lower grades we have a reading programme where the parents have to assist the child in reading the readers. The parents take a most active part there in helping the teacher so that the child masters reading and word recognition (Ms. Makhuba, Deputy, School D).

Ms Dube, a teacher at School D, required all parents to read and correct the first drafts of their child's essays.

When I give a composition. I give a topic and I outline what the child must write about and then I say, "You must write your composition. After you have written then you give it to your parent to go through. Then your parent will be underlining your mistakes, your spelling and then from there you re-write. I want the page where your parent has underlined and also signed and put the date". I want to involve them [parents] and they appreciate it. Then they discover, "You are able to write this composition my daughter on your own, here at home". Yes!

Only one teacher recognised the importance of educational games but she had not approached the parents about this. None of the parents or teachers had experienced, or were aware of, the specially made-up home packages which have been created in many foreign countries for learners and their parents to work on together or any other forms that learning in the home can take (see 2.4.5).

6.2.5.4 *Discussion*

Teachers and schools did not seem to be fully aware of how beneficial parent involvement in the home can be to the child academically and in other ways (see 2.4.5). Although teachers and parents recognised that home discussion was important, teachers did not encourage parents to talk to their children or attempt to teach parents how to do this. This is unlike the situation in the USA where home discussion was one of the most popular techniques encouraged by teachers (Epstein 1986:282).

The interviews indicated, however, that, as is the case in the USA (Epstein 1986:282), Swazi parents did talk to their children about schoolwork, future goals and events at the school. This finding was substantiated by the quantitative data in which parents reported that the vast majority of their children liked to talk to them about school (Item 3, Table 5.26) and that they talked to their children about school work (Item 16, Table 5.29). This is very important since home discussion has been found to have a particularly strong effect on academic outcomes (Ho & Willms 1996a:137-138).

Teachers and parents interviewed felt that parent involvement in homework was essential. Both teachers and parents always specified the parents' involvement in homework when describing the role of the parent. Research has consistently shown that parents consider homework to be important (Epstein 2001:185). The quantitative findings indicated that over 85% of the parents agreed that their

child should get more homework (see Item 4, Table 5.28). The parents interviewed felt that they should both help with and supervise homework. Some of the parents interviewed set aside specific times for homework and some did not. The quantitative data indicated that most parents had rules about homework (Item 36, Table 5.29). However, the rather unspecific language of this item does not make it clear whether these rules concerned just doing the homework or when and how it should be done. Nevertheless this response suggests that most parents did supervise homework in some way.

While all the interviewed parents did make time to help with and supervise homework, teachers' opinions on how involved most parents were in this way differed widely. Some teachers felt that very few parents either helped or supervised homework. Other teachers felt that while most parents supervised homework they did not actually help their children with it. Still other teachers felt that most parents both supervised and helped with homework. Only one teacher, unlike the third of teachers in a study by Izzo's *et al* (1999), felt he wasn't in the position to know what happened at the children's homes.

Epstein and van Voorhis (2001:185) found that of all types of involvement, parents from the USA said they most wanted to help their children with homework so that their children would do better. The quantitative data support the view of those teachers who believed that most parents helped and supervised homework since over two-thirds of the parents claimed to have helped their children with homework and checked that it was done many times that year (Items 20 and 21, Table 5.29). These figures are considerably higher than those found in South African and American studies (see 5.7.1) but are in accordance with Swazi parents' desire for more homework and the very strong feelings about homework of the parents interviewed.

The parents' responses do not seem to be particularly biased towards socially acceptable responses (see 5.7.1). Therefore, such a bias is not likely to explain the difference in the perceptions of parents and some teachers about whether parents were helping with and supervising homework. Moreover, the parents' responses to the items that dealt directly with homework (Items 4, 20, 21, and 36) were remarkably consistent with two-thirds of the parents choosing the most positive response for all items (see 5.6.3 & 5.7.1). Thus, most parents probably supervised and helped with homework.

Teachers at the same schools differed widely in their perception of parent involvement in homework. It is possible that the actions and attitudes of the teachers themselves may have resulted in some teachers experiencing very little support from parents with regard to homework, while others experienced a great deal of support. Thus, while the majority of parents probably supervised and helped with homework, some teachers may have been unaware of this. Teachers' actions clearly influenced the level of home supervision by parents that teachers experienced. Teachers that encouraged parents to supervise homework by insisting that parents sign homework or homework diaries were also those that reported that most parents supervised their children's homework. Foreign studies have shown that teacher practices are the strongest determinant of how, and in what ways, parents are involved (see 2.7.4).

Another reason why a third of the parents who, by their own admission, did not help with or supervise homework frequently (Items 20 & 21, Table 5.29), may have been due to the frustration some parents expressed about not knowing how to help their children. This is consistent with the findings of Epstein and Dauber (1991:290) that note that most parents need help on how to become involved in their children's education at each grade level. Parents also sometimes became angry and frustrated when trying to help their children to learn at home,

which has been found to be detrimental to a child's learning (Georgiou 1999:425) and may put parents off being involved.

Some teachers felt that it would be better if parents only supervised homework. Consequently, it is not surprising that these teachers made no effort to help parents learn how to help with homework. Some of these teachers were concerned that parents may actually be doing more harm than good when they helped their children. Certainly, parental help with homework has been found to harm the child when done inappropriately (Georgiou 1999:412). However, many of the teachers who did not want parents to help with homework complained that this was because parents often did their children's homework for them. Ironically the literature (Brandt 1989:27) and the comment of Ms. Dlamini indicate, that parents do this precisely because they do not know what the teacher expects.

Most teachers, however, felt that parents could and should help, and they were willing to help parents achieve this but only if the parents approached them. These teachers, like their South African counterparts (see 3.4.3), made no attempt to teach parents the skills they need to help even though they knew parents lacked them. Moreover, although the teachers had noticed the benefits of parents signing homework many of them did not practice this. This lack of action by teachers probably reflects, in part, a general lack of school policy (the exception being School D, which did not enforce its policy) on the parents' role in homework. It also suggests that teachers were ignorant about just how beneficial parent involvement in homework and homework supervision can be if done properly (see 2.4.5).

Teachers' comments reflected the belief that homework should provide learners with an opportunity to practice skills taught in class, help them prepare for the next lesson, and encourage their personal development. These teachers did not

seem to be aware that homework could be used as a tool for parental involvement. Homework can be designed to guide and promote positive communications between the parent and child and between the parent and teacher (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:182).

All of the schools, except School E, encouraged parents to be involved in reading programmes for their young children. Moles (1982:46) notes that this is one the most popular approaches teachers use to involve parents but that its use tends to decline from 1st to 5th grade. These teachers also remarked that this technique was used in the children's early years at the school rather than throughout their education.

The teachers interviewed were not aware of home packages or paired reading and did not encourage parents to play educational games with their children, discuss TV programmes with them, help them to prepare for tests, read to them or read their essays (with the exception of Ms. Dube). Nor were teachers aware of the myriad other ways that parents could be involved in home learning activities. This finding is consistent with the quantitative results. Between a half and three-quarters of the parents responded that they had only listened to their child read, read a story their child wrote, practiced skills before a test, or talked to their child about TV programmes (see Items 18, 19, 23, 24 & 25, Table 5.30) at most a few times that year. Most parents also only played educational games with their child infrequently or not at all (see Item 26, Table 5.31). It is likely that parents were not aware of the benefits of these activities for their children (see 5.7.2 and 5.7.3) because teachers made no attempt to inform them of these benefits, probably as they were unaware of them themselves.

6.2.6 Parents did not make decisions

Parents were interviewed in order to determine what their role was in making decisions about issues such as school uniform, discipline, staff appointment and dismissal, school management, teaching methods and curriculum. The interviews also aimed to determine what role teachers and parents wished parents to play in decision-making. Most of the schools had two potential decision-making councils, the School Board and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).

6.2.6.1 *The School Boards: Often powerful but usually not representative*

Schools A, B, C and D had School Boards. The roles and composition of these bodies differed from school to school. Schools A, B and C all had School Boards that consisted of a small group of individuals that had not been elected by the parents and were, thus, not representative of the parent body as a whole. In School A, this was a group of parents and local business people who had played a large role in funding the school. In School B and C these groups were composed of religious leaders as well as a few parents selected by these religious leaders. Ms. Nxumalo, a parent interviewed, was on the School Board of School C.

In Schools A and B the School Board was very powerful and decided matters such as school uniform, discipline, staff appointment and dismissal, teaching methods and the curriculum. In School C the School Board chose the schools uniform, decided how school funds should be spent, and played a role in appointing staff. In School D the school committee consisted of only parents, elected by the parent body for a term of three years, and the head-teacher. This committee was concerned with the schools long-term goals.

We discussed things like maybe trying to make the school a high school and the construction of a library which was successful so they are running that library now (Ms. Dlamini, parent, committee member, School D).

6.2.6.2 *PTA's were fundraising bodies*

All of the schools except School C had PTAs. These PTA's were composed of a few teachers that served on them on a rotational basis but, unlike most of the school boards, the majority of the members were parents who had been elected by the parent body. Thus, at Schools A, B, and E it was only the PTA's that were in any way representative of the parent body and it was only through these bodies that the parent body was afforded any opportunity to make decisions.

A few of the teachers and parents recognised the importance of PTA's in giving parents a role in decision-making.

We need the parents as well [to come to the PTA meetings] as there are issues there where they have to take a decision. A second person cannot take a decision on your [the parents] behalf (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

There is that exchange of knowledge and strategies because as we know life is changing so if there are radical changes we need to get cross fertilisation of ideas so that we can move the school forward (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C)

However, the interviews revealed that the mandate of these bodies at the school was very limited and that they in fact afforded parents very little opportunity to make decisions. The PTA committees of the four schools focussed on fundraising. These committees met once or several times a year to organise fundraising activities.

Actually for now we have been meeting very often because of problems at the school. We wanted to rehabilitate the swimming pool so we wanted to make a fundraising. When we have some projects to execute then we meet often (Mr. Razibuhoro, parent, School D).

PTA committees also had other duties at some of the school's such as ensuring that school fees were collected and that teachers had accommodation. A number of parents and teachers mentioned other roles that they felt the PTA should play; notably these did not relate to decision-making.

I think that's [PTA meetings] where the parents and teachers can work together [to help the child] and get to know more about the parents (Ms. Nxumalo, parent, School C).

We need the PTA to bring them closer. So if there are any problems you can easily communicate, we have overlooked that (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

We should meet not only to discuss where the money was spent but also each teacher can say something to the parents towards the performance of their children (Mr. Dladla, teacher, School D).

Mr. Razibuhoro was the chairman of the PTA of School D and Mr. Tsabedze had served on this committee previously.

At general PTA meetings, which were held between one to three times per annum, parents were informed about the activities and agenda of the school, how the school's funds had been spent, and they elected the PTA committee. Teachers reported that attendance at these general PTA meetings at Schools B, D and E was good. The parents interviewed whose children attended School D reported that either they or their spouse always attended these meetings. Teachers reported that those parents on the actual PTA committee of School A were dedicated. PTA meetings for the entire parent body were held more frequently at School A than at the other schools, however, attendance was poor. Mr. Reed, a teacher at School A, gave this example:

Like at the PTA meeting earlier this year had to be postponed and redone because there weren't enough people for quorum.

School C had no PTA and since only two parents who had not been elected were on the governing body, parents at this school had no formal channels for making any decisions. Although the teachers and parents both felt a PTA was necessary, most teachers at the group interview, with the exception of Mr. Nkunita, were

not deeply troubled by the lack of this body. In reply to a question on whether the school now had a PTA, Ms. Wade (head-teacher) said, shaking her head,

No, we've tried but they've never really come together.

The parents of School C expressed more urgency with regard to the formation of a PTA, however none of them mentioned this matter when asked how they felt about the school generally but only when asked directly about the PTA.

I think it's good to have a PTA because sometimes disciplinary and some of the school's issues need to be solved by parents and teachers (Mr. Nardu, parent, School C).

6.2.6.3 Parents were excluded from decisions about school uniform

The school uniform at Schools D and E had been decided many years previously and it was unknown whether parents had had any input at that time. There were several alternative items with the same function that could be worn at these schools and the teachers noted proudly that parents could make a choice of which of these items their children wore to school. Parents also approved the quality of the school clothes.

They [parents] look at the quality and then the guarantee of the garment and if somebody has a recommendation then they raise, discuss and approve it in the [PTA] meeting (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Ensuring the quality of the school uniform was also the parent's main role in the other three schools with respect to uniform. The staff had chosen the school uniform at School A and the School Board had chosen the school uniform at Schools B and C. At School C this decision had been made by the School Board exclusively even though some of its members were aware that parents wished to contribute to this decision.

We, our school took a long time to decide on the school uniform and I know some parents and they said, "You [the School Board] must let us know, we want to choose the uniform for our children." The School Board chose it, the School Board chose it (Ms. Nxumalo, parent and School Board member, School C).

In response to whether parents had a say in the school uniform, Mr. Fortune, a teacher at School B, replied:

No, no, no. The school committee has always made school decisions.

Nevertheless, all the teachers interviewed felt that the school should consult the parents if changes in the school uniform were to be made. School E had recently considered changing the pattern of the uniform:

...and at the same time there were ideas that were taken to the parents and it was approved, they felt it was a good idea, they accepted that (Mr. Nyoni, teacher, School E).

None of the parents felt that they should exclusively decide on matters dealing with the school uniform. However, some parents embraced the idea of helping make these decisions.

Yes, yes, I think parents should have an input in that (Ms. Dlamini, parent School D).

To the researcher's surprise, most of the parents felt that the school or Ministry of Education should exclusively make this decision.

I don't really think it's the parents' duty to be involved in the curriculum, the uniform and these things (Mr. Razibuhoro, parent, School D).

I think school uniform and school discipline should be decided by the school because mostly they are the ones that are instilling that code, dress code, ethic code, everything for the school (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C).

6.2.6.4 Schools should decide about discipline

Discipline in Schools A and B was carried out in accordance with school policy, which was decided by the School Board. At Schools C, D and E school discipline was based on the policy of the Ministry of Education. All the schools did, however, call the children's parents to the school to notify them, and to recruit their assistance, whenever serious disciplinary problems arose.

We take the child to the office and the parents have to be called. Maybe the parents are not aware of what is going on...The Ministry of education lays

down the guidelines and we are aware of the community that we are in as the parents may sue us (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

A few teachers and parents felt that parents should have a role in deciding how their children are disciplined.

It would be fine if parents helped decide on the discipline because these are their children. They have to have a word on that (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

Sometimes disciplinary and some school issues need to be solved by both parents and teachers (Mr. Nardu, parent, School C).

Most of the teachers, however, felt the school staff knew better than parents how best to discipline the children.

The [school] policy on discipline, I feel its still Ok. But you know a lot of parents they will come in and say, "You should beat them." you know, but we try to explain to them the negative effects of corporal punishment (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

We consider the [parent's] request [about forms of discipline and other suggestions] and consider the validity and how reasonable it is. If it fits in with what we think should be happening. So at times we agree and other times we might say, "No we can't go with that because", and then the reasoning would be conveyed to the parent. (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

Most of the parents agreed that the teachers should decide how to discipline their children at the school, but explained that this was because the teacher was the one who had to handle the problems.

No I think it [discipline] should be entirely on the school because most of the time the children are with the teachers. So if I decide that you mustn't spank my child how are they going to handle that situation? So I think its on their part (Ms. Dlamini, parent, School D).

6.2.6.5 Teachers and parents placed confidence in the administration to appoint or dismiss teachers

At Schools C, D and E in accordance with education policy, the Ministry of Education chose the candidates to be appointed to teaching and administrative posts at the school. Sometimes several candidates were chosen and the head-teacher selected the successful one. No staff member had ever been dismissed from these three schools. At School C the School Board also approved appointments and hired a few teachers outside of the Ministry of Education. At School's A and B staff were appointed or dismissed by the School Board in consultation with the head-teacher.

Both teachers and parents had great confidence in the head-teacher and School Board or Ministry of Education's ability to choose appropriate candidates and did not feel that parental input was necessary.

I think when it comes to that, I have got a lot of confidence especially in the School C principal and management staff there and I know actually whoever they are going to employ as a teacher is definitely qualified and that is my main concern (Mr. Nardu, parent, School C).

I don't think that they would employ out of ignorance. Normally a CV must be submitted and they would be able to screen the applications because really it would reflect on them if they chose someone unsuitable (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

The only exception was Ms. Dlamini, a parent whose child attended School D, who when asked if parents should play a role in the appointment of teachers replied:

I'm not sure about that because in most of the schools in Swaziland, the teachers are employed by the Government so I don't think it could happen. But if it could, I would love parents to play a role.

6.2.6.6 The school timetable was the responsibility of the school staff

The school staff made all decisions about the academic and extra-mural timetable. The teachers felt that this was the role of the staff or head-teacher. The parents agreed. In response to being asked if parents were invited to make this sort of decision, Mr. Reed, a teacher at School A replied:

No, I think that's more what our role is.

School A, had however sent home a survey asking parents whether they wanted a study-period for their children included in the school timetable.

6.2.6.7 Teachers felt parents could contribute to the curriculum and teaching methods

Teaching methods were decided upon by individual teachers who, however, followed the Ministry of Education's guidelines in the case of Schools C, D and E or School Board policy in the case of Schools A and B.

There are some teaching objectives and some teaching aids, so that the format is in the teachers guide but then the teacher can sort of individualise (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Similarly, the Ministry of Education determined the curriculum for Schools C, D and E while the School Board decided the curriculum at Schools A and B.

The parents have never played any significant role especially in the curriculum or direct teaching yet (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

Most parents felt that they should be informed about which curriculum was being used by the school but should not be involved in its choice. These parents believed that most parents were not educated enough in this field to help make these decisions.

There are disadvantages associated with that kind of arrangement [parents deciding on the curriculum]. If maybe the level of education of the parent is not high enough to make an informed decision. Because designing a curriculum must be quite taxing. You take into account lots of developments and also the job market so there are so many factors which I believe come into play and which involve, among other things, a lot of research. So I don't

think we have the capacity and skills to make such decisions but it would be a good idea to be briefed on why we are moving towards that curriculum (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C).

Mr. Nardu (a parent, School C), felt parents had an important role in helping their children choose subjects.

I've got this idea if all these children want to pursue a particular line and their selection will depend on what they are interested in and I could be more aware of it than the school and as such could play a very big role making that sort of decision.

Of the parents, only Ms. Dlamini unreservedly felt that parents should be involved in the choice of curriculum.

Surprisingly, many of the teachers were more positive about a role for parents in the choice of curriculum and teaching methods than the parents themselves. These teachers felt that parents should work together with teachers and the Ministry either because they had the right to do so and/or would contribute positively.

I think we'd be happy to hear opinions [of parents] on anything, because even these parents when the child is now finished school without any job, then it hits back onto the parent. So they should be involved as this education is for their children. This side is for the teacher with the Ministry of Education [*pointing to the right*], this side [*pointing to the left*] is the parent so if they can work hand in hand with the curriculum [*clasping her hands together*] (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Most parents forming the School E community are learned parents but the thing is this is done by government so parents are some how neglected. They have not been given the chance to, maybe put some additions or bring about changes [in the curriculum]. Otherwise they should be doing something. They would have some valuable things if only ever the chance could be there (Mr. Nyoni, teacher, School E).

A much smaller group of teachers agreed with the parents that parents were not adequately educated to participate in choices about curriculum or teaching methods.

We could listen to them but its something that is way over their heads, you need experts for that to really set-up the curriculum (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

I think, curriculum the school needs to decide on that because not every parent is in the education field. They would no know what to submit to the school committee (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

Parents had no advocacy role at any of these schools.

6.2.6.8 *Discussion*

Parental involvement in decision-making is essential for any true partnership between parents and the school and is beneficial to parents, teachers and children in several ways (see 2.4.6). Research indicates that this type of parent involvement is particularly difficult to implement and that at most schools, parents play a very limited, usually advisory, role in decision-making (see 2.4.6). Both the qualitative and quantitative data in this study indicate that parents have virtually no decision-making powers whatsoever at Swazi schools.

The interviews revealed that at the private schools, Schools A and B, virtually all decisions were made by the School Board, while at the government schools most decisions were made by the Ministry of Education. Those decisions not made by the School Board or Ministry of Education were made by the staff at schools A and B or by the staff and School Boards at the other three schools. Even though education policy assigns some role to parents when changes in the curriculum are made (see 3.3.2.2), in practice parents had no say in the curriculum. Parents were only consulted when disciplinary issues arose. However, since teachers felt they knew best how to discipline the learners, it seems likely that this was an

attempt to enlist parents' support rather, than to allow them to contribute to decisions about discipline.

This qualitative finding, that parents at these schools did not even have an advisory role in virtually all decisions, was supported by the quantitative data. The items that concern decision-making, Items 48 to 52 (see Table 5.34), received the most negative responses of any items in the questionnaire with between 73% and 89% of the parents reporting that the school did not invite them to contribute to decision-making or "could do much better" in this respect.

Thus, in government subsidised Swazi schools parents were given no role in even those few decisions, such as school uniform, that were not made by the Ministry of Education. This was despite the requests of parents at School C to help choose a uniform. Further, in the private schools where the Ministry of Education did not prevent parents from making decisions, parents were nevertheless not even allowed to play an advisory role in decision-making.

Only at School D did parents have any say in decisions that may have helped them to have a sense of ownership of the school, given them the opportunity to make use of their talents and ideas, and helped ensure that there was a better fit between the school and the needs of the children (see 2.4.6). The School Board of School D was elected by parents and made decisions about the long-term goals and objectives of the school. Thus, while the parents on the board were not given a say in curriculum development, teaching methods and so forth, they did at least play a role in determining the future direction and needs of the school.

While some teachers felt that parents were not educated enough, or had nothing to contribute in terms of making decisions, most teachers welcomed a greater role for parents in decision-making. However, teachers envisaged a subordinate,

advisory role for parents in decision-making. Many teachers felt the parents had the right and the abilities to contribute positively to decisions about curriculum development, teaching methods and school uniform. The teachers did not see parents' contributions to decisions about the curriculum as a threat to their professional status. Swap (1993:39) notes, "for many educators, curriculum is seen as the centerpiece of their professional expertise". Many of the teachers in other studies have been shown to feel that parents should have no role in decisions that relate to the curriculum (Parr *et al*/1993:37). The only areas where teachers felt parents should have no role were in the appointment of staff and in the design of the school timetable.

Surprisingly, with the exception of Ms. Dlamini, the parents interviewed wanted virtually no role in decision-making. Like parents in some foreign communities (Crozier 1999:319), these parents placed great trust in the school staff and School Board or Ministry of Education to make decisions about their children's education. Parents' positive and trusting attitudes towards the school were also demonstrated by their responses to the section of the questionnaire dealing with parental attitude to the school (see 5.6). The parents felt that school discipline and choices about school uniform should also be left up to the school as it was the teachers who had to face these issues as they only arose at the school. Although the parents wished to be informed about the curriculum used at the school, most did not feel that they were adequately educated to play any role in choosing the curriculum. Since the parents interviewed were some of the more involved parents (see 6.2.8.1), it seems likely that most Swazi parents did not want to make many decisions. Research in other countries has shown that parents often do not want to make decisions (see 2.4.6). This lack of demand by parents for decision-making rights no doubt contributed to the fact that they had almost no role in decision-making in these schools.

Although PTA's serve as decision-making bodies in some schools (see 2.4.6), these bodies, while elected by parents, and thus possibly representative of them, had mainly a fundraising role in these schools and were not envisaged by most parents and teachers to be decision-making bodies.

At School C there was no PTA and teachers were not particularly concerned that parents had no representation of any sort. Parents, while more concerned about the absence of this body than teachers, seemed to accept this. This may have been because they recognised that most PTAs in this community were primarily fundraising bodies and were, consequently, not essential for their children's academic success.

Teachers at Schools B, D and E reported that the general meetings of the parent body were well attended. This perception is supported by the quantitative data, which shows that 60% of parents reported that they did attend these meetings (see Item 29, Table 5.35). This figure is lower than that found in Heystek's South African study (Heystek 1999:101). This is expected as South African legislation affords parents some power as members of these bodies (see 3.3.3.1) and thus, one would expect South African schools to put greater emphasis on these meetings resulting in higher attendance rates. Research has shown that parents prefer to be involved directly in their children's learning (Epstein 1995:708) and do not find these meetings enjoyable (Parr *et al* 1993:38). Thus, it is surprising that such a high proportion of Swazi parents attended these meetings. This relatively high attendance may be because parents were informed of how school funds had been spent at these meetings.

Teachers at School A, however, complained that most parents did not attend these meetings. This may have been because PTAs were far more frequent at School A and parents at this school had many other more enjoyable ways to be involved such as attending social, sports and cultural functions (see 6.2.4.3).

6.2.7 Schools did not collaborate with their communities

Aside from teaching, the five schools did not perform any services for their communities whatsoever. It was clear from the surprised looks on teachers' faces when asked if the school did things like collecting litter for the community, that most teachers had never even thought of this.

The administration of School E made no attempt to involve the local community, even to raise funds.

Most of the time the school does everything. If maybe, that mind is not within the school administration to ask for donations [from the local community]. They can because we've seen this happening in schools around. If they ask for donations they end up getting them (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

Community involvement at the other schools was also very limited. Schools A, B, and D requested financial help from local businesses. Schools B and D were not too successful in this regard. When asked if the local community helped the school in anyway, Ms. Dube, a teacher at School D, replied:

Not much, but when we are having a fundraising then we go and ask for things, like if we are having a draw, things to be won but there are so many schools around. I think that all the schools go to the same businessmen "Hayyi! This school, another school" but they are trying their best.

School D also invited members of the Manzini community to talk to the learners every Thursday. It had not occurred to them to invite parents to present these talks.

Every Thursday there is a speaker. It depends on what field but we normally have it for the whole year. They speak about different topics, a career, growing-up, a good life (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

School A was given quite a lot of support from the local community both financially and also in terms of the use of sports facilities. The community members who gave this support were mostly parents of children at School A.

The business community is very supportive financially, also in terms of us being the place they would recommend to expatriates or people they are bringing in [to Swaziland]. Obviously our board of Governors comes from the business community. The Manzini Club has been very supportive in-terms of providing sports facilities when we haven't had. Even now they provide sport facilities so I think we've got a lot (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

Schools B and C received some financial help from the religious communities that supported them. School C relied entirely on this help and did not request assistance from the larger community. In both schools a few staff members were volunteers from these religious communities.

Discussion

Very little community involvement occurred at these schools. It had not occurred to the teachers and schools that they could perform services for their communities. Most of the schools made no attempt to involve the wider community in their schools in any other way than to ask for donations. The administration of School E did not even do this although the teachers knew that other local schools had some success in this area. Only School D involved the wider community in any other way than financially and this was by inviting members of the community, and community organisations, to talk to the learners every Thursday. The quantitative results support the finding that the schools made little attempt to involve the wider community. Over 70% of parents reported that the school did not, or "could do much better", in terms of approaching and involving the community, local businesses and community organisations (see Items 53 and 54 in Table 5.34). Thus, in Swaziland, like in South Africa (see 3.4.3) involvement from the wider community at schools was very limited.

School A relied mainly on support from the parents, while Schools B and C relied mainly on support from religious communities. Support from these religious communities was considerable and was mainly in the form of financial resources, sports facilities and teaching staff.

6.2.8 Summary: Opportunities and possibilities for parental involvement.

6.2.8.1 *The determinants of parental involvement*

As discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.6) the involvement of parents in their children's education is determined by the efforts made by the school to involve parents, including the opportunities provided by the school for parental involvement, and whether the parents take these opportunities as well as the extent to which they involve themselves in activities that they can choose whether to be involved in or not.

The quantitative and qualitative data suggest that parents could not be involved, or were severely limited in their involvement, in many activities that were under the control of the schools, their school boards, or the Ministry of Education. These bodies gave parents very few opportunities to be involved in their children's education.

Parents were not given the opportunity to attend workshops on parenting styles or other basic parenting obligations, to volunteer in the classroom or supervise other activities during the school day, or even to have an advisory role in virtually all the decisions that involved their children's education. This makes it impossible for parents to accept ownership of the school, and perpetuates the divide between schools and parents (Lazar & Slostad 1999:207).

Parents were also limited in their involvement at school events by the scarcity of fundraising, sports, cultural, and social events at all the schools except School A. Although, most parents took the few opportunities they were given to attend, these events were held so rarely that parents could not be involved at the school in these ways more than a few times a year at most. Parents were rarely asked to help organise and manage these events but did help when given the opportunity.

The wider community was also given very little opportunity to be involved with the schools since most schools only perceived the community to be a source of funds.

These schools did, however, give parents the opportunity to receive information from the school. A strength of these schools was school to home communication. Frequent letters were sent to parents inviting them to events at the school and informing them of resources required by the schools, the school agenda, and the problems and progress of their children. Parents were not, however, told about the topics their children were learning about. Moreover, while teachers welcomed parents at the school, the schools provided very few official channels for home to school communication. Parents were only invited to communicate with teachers at the annual teacher-parent meetings and when their children had problems.

While the schools, school boards and the Ministry of Education prevented parents from being involved in some ways in their children's education by restricting parents' opportunities for involvement, they did not determine the parents' opportunities to be involved in learning activities in the home or to fulfill their basic obligations.

Teachers generally felt that most parents made some effort to be involved, while only a small proportion were highly active and a small proportion were totally

uninvolved. The parents interviewed were those who had attended the parent workshops (see 4.3.5.3). They held discussions with their children and supervised and helped with homework. They attended the few events that occurred at the school, PTA meetings, and parent-teacher meetings. These parents visited the school and spoke to teachers and most of them had served on either the PTA committee or School Board. Thus, the parents interviewed were highly involved in their children's education in most of the areas in which they had the opportunity be involved.

The teacher interviews and the parents' responses to the questionnaire indicated that the majority of parents were active in many of the same ways as the highly involved parents interviewed. Namely, they helped with and supervised homework, conducted home discussions, supervised their children's TV watching, attended PTA meetings, and visited their children's classrooms occasionally. Most of these parents probably attended events at the school and did fundraising on the rare occasions they were given the opportunity to do so. Nevertheless, over a third of the parents had not spoken to the teacher at all that year, just over 40% did not supervise TV watching, and 60% had not attended parent-teacher meetings. Further, most parents did not, help their children to prepare for tests, play educational games with them, discuss TV programmes with them or do reading activities with them frequently. Although School A provided parents with numerous opportunities to organise and manage events at the school only a small group took this opportunity.

The teachers' views and the quantitative findings both suggested that a small proportion of parents were hardly involved in their children's education at all.

6.2.8.2 How teachers and parents felt parents should be involved in their children's education

The design of an effective programme of parental involvement requires knowledge of how parents and teachers feel parents should be involved in their children's education (Gettinger & Guetschow 1998:40). Both teachers and parents must be convinced of the necessity of parent involvement in a particular area for parents to be effectively involved (see 2.7.2.6 & 2.7.4).

Both the teachers and parents interviewed were aware of the parents' basic obligations, including home supervision, and felt that it was important that parents fulfill them. However, teachers felt that some parents were not aware that their basic obligations included more than paying school fees. As mentioned (see 6.2.8.1), the parents interviewed were probably some of the more involved parents and, thus, it is quite possible that while they recognised their basic parenting obligations, other parents did not.

Both teachers and parents interviewed felt communication between the school and home was very important. However, teachers felt that the parents' role was primarily to take note of, and respond to, school communications and support school disciplinary actions. Although many of the teachers stated that they wanted communication to flow in both directions, these teachers made little effort to encourage parents to talk to them. Most parents may also have felt that their main role was to read and respond to notes from the school because teachers noted that parents responded very well to these notes and the quantitative findings showed that 40% of the parents had not spoken to the teacher that year. Thus, while the responses of the parents interviewed show that they recognised the importance of one-to-one communication between them and the teacher, a large proportion of parents may have felt that personal communication with the teacher was not necessary.

Parents and teachers interviewed felt parents should frequently attend parent-teacher meetings. The low attendance of parents at these meetings may indicate, however, that the majority of the parents did not feel attending these meetings was important.

When questioned, teachers recognised that parents could play a part in fundraising and field trips and that the parents' presence encouraged their children at social, cultural and sporting events. However, they did not usually mention this in their description of the parents role, and did not personally encourage or invite the parents of the children they taught to be involved in these ways. They also did not feel very strongly about the lost opportunities for parental involvement that the lack of these events created at their schools. The parents' interviewed attended these events when they occurred, however, they still did not seem to realise how important their attendance and participation were.

Teachers embraced the idea of parent volunteers. Parents felt that work constraints would limit their involvement at the school.

Both parents and teachers interviewed felt parents should supervise homework. Even though many teachers did not enforce parental supervision of homework they did feel that parents should supervise homework. The quantitative results suggest that most parents did. However, while the parents and some teachers felt parents should help with homework, other teachers felt parents should not help because they did not know how to help and would do more harm than good. Parents and teachers did not seem to be aware that parents could help their children by playing educational games with them, discussing TV programmes and so on. A small proportion of parents did not help with or supervise homework frequently. This suggests that they may not have believed it was necessary for them to be involved in this way.

Most teachers felt that parents should have a contributory role in making decisions on curriculum, teaching methods, and uniform although they felt that the school should decide on the appointment of staff, discipline and the timetable. In contrast, most parents felt that they should not contribute to these decisions.

6.2.8.3 *Conclusions*

Opportunities for Swazi parents' involvement in their children's education were mostly limited to parenting and involvement in learning activities in the home, usually without any encouragement from the school. Parents also received frequent communication from the school. Parents were given very little opportunity to make decisions or play a role at the school. Teachers did not encourage parents to be involved in virtually any of the myriad of novel and interesting ways currently available. Further not all parents took the few opportunities they had to be involved. Thus, parents at these schools played a very limited, traditional role in their children's education (see 2.1).

The teachers interviewed envisaged a rather limited role for parents in their children's education. Despite having attended the parent workshops, the parents interviewed envisaged an even narrower role for themselves. Nevertheless, these teachers and parents valued the parents' contribution to their children's education and recognised that parents should have a wider role, than parents were having at the time of the interviews. The teachers in particular envisaged a role for parents that would include more school involvement and decision-making. Nevertheless, both teachers and parents envisaged a supportive rather than a partnership role for parents. Parents were seen as subordinate to teachers who were able to provide experiences the parents could not provide.

6.3 Explanations for the current picture of parental involvement at these schools

6.3.1 Introduction

Parental involvement at urban Swazi primary schools was very limited. During the analysis of the interview data some themes arose that shed light on the possible reasons for the limited opportunities parents were given to be involved in their children's education as well why parents and teachers held rather limited views on how parents should be involved. These themes, and those that reveal reasons why parents did not always take the few opportunities they had to be involved, will be explored in the following sections.

6.3.2 The Ministry of Education restricted parental involvement

Teachers and parents recognised the role of the Ministry of Education in parental involvement.

I don't think they [parents] have that space for putting their views. They are not involved. I think that is something the Ministry has to do, try at this time to involve them, because we need them, we need their ideas (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

The education system has not gone to ask parents to get involved. Whereas in other countries the parents [*hitting his fist into his other hand*] must, must, must get involved. But here the system is, "No the parents are not involved and such and such". It is not the right way (Mr. Razibuhoro, parent, School D).

South African school principals felt that the foremost cause of lack of parental involvement at their schools was that decisions concerning the school are made at only the highest level of government (van der Westhuizen & Mosoge

2001:192). Similarly, the Ministry of Education clearly played an important role in the limited parental involvement at these Swazi schools.

Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 3, Swazi education policy describes a very limited role for parents (see 3.3.2.2). Thus, teachers and schools in Swaziland are not under pressure to implement parental involvement. Further, the clear guidelines and resources necessary for implementation of this policy are not present (see 3.3.4). Consequently, it is not surprising that the policy of involving parents in curricular changes was not implemented at these schools (see 6.2.8.1).

Secondly, the practices of the Ministry of Education actually prevented parents from making virtually any decisions about their children's education. Policy did not force private schools to give parents any role in these decisions either (see 6.2.8.1).

Lastly, the Ministry of Education did not require teachers to complete a course on parental involvement as part of their teacher or in-service training (see 3.3.4). This has far reaching implications for parental involvement in Swaziland.

6.3.3 The teachers' and schools' beliefs, knowledge, understanding and views of parental involvement

6.3.3.1 Introduction

Since, the teachers and schools efforts to involve parents largely determine the extent and ways that parents are involved (see 2.7.4), it is important to explore teachers' preparation for, and understanding of, parental involvement.

6.3.3.2 *Teachers did not know about parental involvement or its benefits*

The interviews indicated that teachers were not prepared to involve parents. None of the locally trained teachers interviewed had done a course specifically on parental involvement. They either had no recollection of being taught anything about parents or had only dealt with parent-teacher relationships very superficially. Some of the teachers interviewed had no formal training in education (see Table 4.3). Only Mr. Nkunita who was trained in Zambia felt that he had received any real training in parental involvement but his responses showed that he was not fully aware of how to involve parents.

In reply to the question: "When you did your teaching diploma did they teach you about how you should involve the parents, about how you should interact with parents? What parents can do? Was that part of your teaching diploma?", Ms. Dube, a teacher at School D, said:

Ish, even if it was, it was very little. But now myself I see there is much.

In response to a similar question, Mr. Nyoni, a teacher at School E, replied:

It is just not there.

Before the interviews, most of the teachers did not know what parental involvement really was or how to involve parents. None of the schools had a parental involvement policy.

All I can say is I would like to take this opportunity and thank you for coming because it raises something in my mind if you come and interview me on this topic. [Now I know] parents need to be involved and maybe that strategy of how we get them to be involved (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

The teachers had never heard of many parental involvement strategies such as parenting workshops (see 6.2.2.2), home visits (see 6.2.3.2), parent volunteers, and packages of home activities. In reply to a question on whether they would like help from parent volunteers, Mr. Fortune, a teacher at School B, said:

Wow, that would be nice, I've never even thought of that.

Ms. Malaza's, School D, initial response was:

I don't know we've never seen such.

Discussion

Like teachers in South Africa (van Wyk 2001:127) and many other parts of the world (Epstein1987b:8; Jones 2001:18), the teachers interviewed in this study had not had any training in parental involvement. Thus, it is hardly surprising that they did not understand what parental involvement was before the interviews, and had not heard of many parental involvement techniques. This was also true of South African teachers (van Wyk 2001:127).

Due to their lack of education in parental involvement, the teachers and schools also lacked a full appreciation of the benefits of parental involvement. This was displayed by the limited formal opportunities the schools provided parents to be involved in traditional ways that they had been aware of prior to the interviews, such as the attendance of events at their school (see 6.2.4.6) and home to school communication (see 6.2.3.4). Moreover, although the teachers' responses indicated that they felt parents should be involved in these and other ways (6.2.8.2) they did not insist on parental involvement in these areas. Teachers and schools also did not always persist in involving parents. School C made several half-hearted attempts at involving parents, which were soon abandoned (see 6.2.4.5 and 6.2.6.2). Furthermore, even though the researcher offered a workshop for parents on parental involvement at all five schools at no charge (see 4.2.8), only the head-teachers of Schools C and D actually wanted, and hosted, these workshops. These head-teachers did not however discuss the report given to all of these schools on parental involvement with their staff before the group interviews, despite the fact that they had promised to do so and had provided ample time. In fact, most of the teachers were unaware of its existence and, thus, had no understanding of parental involvement prior to the

group interview (see 4.3.5.2). The head-teacher at School D also apparently forgot the group discussion and was not present for it (see 4.3.5.2a).

6.3.3.3 Teachers did not view involving parents as part of their role

The first question teachers were asked was what they felt their role was in the education of learners. Since the teachers did not know about parental involvement prior to the interviews, it is hardly surprising that when they described their role, not a single teacher included initiating or promoting parental involvement or even establishing positive relationships with parents. Most teachers focussed their role as a facilitator of learning and as a role model.

So I think the role of a primary teacher is to instill those basics [of the learning material] because they are very important. A child without those basics may not be able to attack, maybe problems in mathematics, when he or she is in high school (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

I think as a teacher, not you choose to be, but with the situation, you become a role model of some form. The way you conduct yourself, the way you approach the children and the way you teach them is important (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

Many of the teachers felt their role as a teacher included a role as a parent to the learners. However, while they felt this parental role improved their effectiveness as teachers and partially compensated for lack of parent attention in the home, they did not feel they could actually replace the parent (see also quotations in 6.2.2.2).

I must give that sense of love and if I am saying I am partly a mother here, I must give that love so they want to be with me. Even if they did not get a smile at home, let me give them a smile and a hug. But we can't actually do the parents' job (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

They [the parents] have got a huge role. We [the teachers] are only busy with the kids, 5 hours, 6 hours in the classroom. They are busy with the kids over

the weekends, in the afternoons, in the evenings. The kids are learning their morals their, from the house (Mr. Reed, teacher, School A).

However, the teachers did try to substitute the parents on some occasions.

When you sort of take a very parental approach to the way you teach the kids in the class it always seems to be very positive. Because, for example, Njabu [the child's name], we [the teachers] actually sat down and discussed her case as teachers and we came to the conclusion that there is a problem at home. Nobody seems to care much for her. And when the teachers tried to open themselves to her and bring her close, more or less substitute the parents, she improved greatly (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

Discussion

Teachers at these schools did not feel that their role included forming relationships with parents and initiating and encouraging parental involvement. Consequently, they did not go to much effort to do so. In addition to facilitating learning and serving as role models, teachers felt that they needed to adopt a parental role in their teaching. When teachers recognised that some learners did not have positive home circumstances their approach was to attempt to substitute the parent rather than approach the parent. This demonstrates the teachers' lack of orientation to parental involvement.

6.3.3.4 Teachers did not recognise their responsibility for parental involvement

During the course of the interviews the teachers noted a number of ways that they were willing for parents to be involved, however, they often expected the parents to initiate and maintain involvement (see also 6.2.3.3a & 6.2.5.2).

Mr. Nyoni, School E, complained:

Parents have begun to put less effort on their side. They used to come to the school anytime, say they see that their kids are not doing well. They used to tell us, before we could ask, how the child was performing at home and the behaviour of the child as such. But now they are so much relaxed, it needs the teacher to go to them.

Many of the teachers did however recognise, in contrast to some educators in South Africa (see 3.4.4.3), that they had a role in the low levels of parental involvement at their schools. Ms. Crawford, a teacher at School A, noted:

Its not forthcoming in terms of the parents, in terms of giving suggestions [to volunteer to speak to the learners at the school] but I think its also maybe we haven't gone out and canvassed for that sort of thing which is perhaps an idea we can add in.

Discussion

Newport (1992:52) states, "The major agent to achieve participation will be teachers and executives who first, will have to convince parents that they are welcome and necessary participants, and second, will have to educate parents in the knowledge and skills essential to successful participation in the practices of schools. Thus, it is the teachers who will have the major responsibility for the effective development of parental participation". Although many professionals agree that it is the responsibility of the teacher to make the first move in reaching out to families (Morris & Taylor 1998:220), these Swazi teachers had not received training in parental involvement. As a result it is not surprising that they did not always recognise that parental involvement was primarily their responsibility. Like teachers in other studies (Newport 1992:47), they felt the onus was on the parents to get involved and did not seem to realise that parents would require a great deal of encouragement and support to be involved.

6.3.3.5 Teachers viewed parents as problem solvers not partners

When asked what a parent's role in his child's education should be, teachers emphasised a number of roles. These included talking to their children, being aware of everything occurring in their children's lives, communication with the school, supervising homework, sometimes helping with homework, and attending parent-teacher meetings (see 6.2.8.2). However, teachers repeatedly referred to parents as problem solvers. In response to a question of how many times

teachers felt they needed to see parents, Ms. Mazibuko, a teacher at School C, replied:

Twice a term. But with the children who give us problems, I think each week. If they turn up each week and see the problems of the child I think it can make a difference.

When the parent takes his or her role efficiently, it is only when he can join hands with the teacher and define the problem in the earliest stages so that the child can get help as soon as problems are identified (Mr. Nyoni, teacher, School E).

Discussion

Like South African (see 3.4.4.3) and foreign teachers (Delgado-Gaitan 1991:32), above all other roles teachers seemed to rely on parents to help them solve problems they were having with the child. Aside from parent-teacher meetings, parents were only invited to come to talk to teachers when their children were having problems (see 6.2.3.3a). These were also the parents that teachers felt they needed to see (see 6.2.3.3a). Only when children had problems, did teachers actually demand parental involvement and feel they truly needed parents, if only to enlist the parents' support. Since teachers did not feel truly reliant on parents in other ways, they could not view parents as partners in their children's education. Some teachers felt parents should not even help with homework (see 6.2.5.2), and none of the teachers frequently invited parents to the school to communicate information or help in other ways (see 6.2.3.4 & 6.2.4.6). Parents were rarely even informed about what their children were being taught (see 6.2.3.3a).

In conclusion, because teachers did not really know what parental involvement was or appreciate its benefits, prior to the interviews, teachers did not realise that they needed parents as partners. Moreover, the Ministry of Education

effectively prevented parents from having a partnership with the school by stripping away most of their decision-making capabilities.

6.3.3.6 Teachers had little time or energy for parental involvement

There is no remedy for anything here, you must just work. We don't have any leisure time here at work, we teach non-stop (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Since these schools offered parents very little opportunity to be involved, the possible impact of the above statement was not readily apparent. Throughout the interviews teachers mentioned ideas they had had, but not had the time or energy to implement. They also repeatedly mentioned how exhausting their large classes and full teaching schedules were. Further, although teachers were very enthusiastic during the interviews, they expressed reluctance to be repeatedly interviewed due to lack of time. Even the annual fundraising event was not always held at School D because teachers were too tired (see 6.2.4.2). Often teachers enthusiastically embraced a new idea for parental involvement but ended their endorsement of it with the words "if there is time". Teachers seemed to be continually rushing from duty to duty and had very little time to think about parental involvement or energy to implement it.

6.3.3.7 The theoretical stance of the schools

In practice Swap's Protective Model or Epstein's Separate Spheres of Influence Model operated at Schools B, C, D & E (see 2.7.4.4). Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that that parents at these schools were not encouraged to be involved, had very few opportunities for involvement, and were not permitted to make decisions (see 5.10 & 6.2.8.1). As such the functions of the school and the parents were kept separate.

Schools usually adopt the Protective Model to protect the school from the interference of the parents (Swap 1993:28). However, while this model seems to be operating at most of these schools, this did not seem to arise from the belief

of the majority of teachers and head-teachers that the school needs to be protected from the interference of parents. Although a few teachers and the head-teacher at School E (see 6.3.4.2c) did seem to believe in the Protective Model, the comments and actions of the vast majority of the teachers clearly indicated that most of the teachers were open to a different theoretical stance, Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model (see 2.7.4.4). These teachers believed that parents could support the school by contributing to the enrichment of the curriculum, volunteering at the school, and playing an advisory role in decision-making (see 6.2.8.2). It seems likely that at most schools the practice of the Protective Model was a historical left-over from the days in which parents really were not welcome at schools. Teachers and head-teachers probably allowed the minimal opportunities for parental involvement at these schools to continue simply because they did not realise all the ways parents could be involved or understand how beneficial this involvement could be. Teachers also did not have the time to worry about many types of parental involvement, which they felt were not too important anyway.

6.3.3.8 *Conclusions*

Since parental involvement forms no part in teacher certification or in in-service training, as is also the case in South Africa (see 3.3.4), Swazi teachers did not know what parental involvement truly was or the extent to which learners, teachers, and parents can benefit from it. They did not, as a result, feel that it was part of their role and their responsibility to initiate and encourage parental involvement and were not too concerned about the very limited opportunities parents were given to be involved by these schools. As a result the teachers allowed the Protective Model of parental involvement to operate at these schools. Teachers also had a rather limited view of parents' roles as a result of this lack of education. Parents were seen, primarily, as problem solvers and not as partners. The teachers were, however, clearly very dedicated and most teachers enthusiastically embraced other involvement roles for parents (see

6.2.8.2) when they became aware, during the interviews, that parents could become involved in these ways. Generally teachers were in favour of the School-to-Home Transmission Model of parental involvement. This new teacher awareness of ways parents could be involved accounted in part for the discrepancy between the role teachers envisaged for parents and the limited opportunities that teachers and schools gave parents to be involved at the time of the interviews.

Thus, primarily because of their lack of knowledge about parental involvement, teachers did not initiate or encourage much parental involvement in those areas under their control. This, combined with the limitations to parental involvement imposed by the Ministry of Education, resulted in very few opportunities for parental involvement. Nevertheless, parents did not always take the opportunities they had to be involved (see 6.2.6.8).

6.3.4 Parents' beliefs, knowledge, understanding and views of parental involvement

6.3.4.1 Introduction

Swazi parents did not have the opportunity to be involved in certain ways whether they would have liked to be involved or not. These included: making almost all decisions about their children's education; volunteering at the school; attending workshops; and visiting the school frequently to attend events (see 6.2.8.1). Nevertheless, it is quite possible that parents would not be involved in all of these ways even if they were given the opportunity. Most parents interviewed, although involved in most other ways available to them (see 6.2.8.1), did not want to make decisions and were uncertain about whether they would be able to volunteer at the school (see 6.2.8.2). Furthermore, the interviews and quantitative data revealed that a substantial proportion of parents

were not involved even in those ways that they had the opportunity to be involved in.

This section deals with how the beliefs, knowledge, understanding and views of parental involvement of these parents limited their involvement and their view of how they should be involved.

6.3.4.2 *Parents' conception of their role*

a) Parents delegated responsibility for their children's education to the school

Teachers at all the schools complained of a small group of parents that were not involved at all (see also 6.2.8.2).

Some parents don't help the children, because we find that sometimes the child comes to school and he has forgotten the book at home. This suggests to me that maybe the parents don't take care. But when the child comes back with the exercise book then we discover she did not finish the work. So the parent did not follow-up to see that the child was doing his work (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

Like South African educators (van der Westhuizen & Mosoge 2001:193), many Swazi teachers felt that some of these parents had delegated the responsibility for educating their children to the school.

Yes, that is the main one. I wanted to say that once the children are here they write the cheque and that's it. All they need is a good report at the end of the year. "Whatever you do to my child is none of my business" (Ms. Nsibande, teacher, School C).

And when you inquire from the parent, she said "It's your problem it's not my problem. You should know what he does with his school books, it's none of my business" and so on. So it was very difficult to work with such a child (Mr. Mduli, teacher, School C).

The parents nowadays think the teacher has to do everything. Largely, they don't think it is their job (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

The interviews revealed three possible explanations for why some parents felt that they could leave their children's education entirely to the school.

b) High school fees absolved parents from responsibility

It is almost like, "We are paying that money, so you must see to my child". The parents will pay the most expensive school fees to a school; thinking and hoping, I would say, that the teacher will take her role (Ms. Costa, teacher, School D).

Mr. Kunene, a parent whose child attended School C, echoed this sentiment:

We are not maybe absolving ourselves from our responsibility, but really you hope that if you part with such a lot of money you expect a larger chunk to be done by the teachers. While the quality is high and the fees are reasonable [at School C] it is a win-win situation, you expect to put a lot of effort because you feel, after all, the teachers are not paid a high enough salary to put a lot of effort. Obviously if the fees you are paying are like the private schools where you are expected to part with E5000 and then to be told you are expected to spend 3 hours a day with helping that child then it doesn't make sense. Because in some cases we feel investing in our children's education we are taking some activities we are supposed to be doing and delegating them to somebody else to make sure he takes full responsibility in fact.

Discussion

School fees at all five schools were higher than those of rural schools, with the fees of Schools A, B and C being the highest (see Table 4.1). There was definitely a perception amongst teachers at these schools that some parents felt that by paying high school fees they no longer needed to be involved. Although, none of the other parents interviewed expressed views similar to that of Mr. Kunene (above), his views suggest that there may be a perception amongst some parents that by paying high school fees they can absolve themselves from

any further role in their children's education. Mr. Kunene seemed to believe that if teachers were paid enough, and put in enough effort, they could replace the parent.

Teachers at Schools D and E also complained that some parents abdicated their responsibilities to the school but they did not put forward the explanation of high school fees.

c) The psychological impact of the theoretical stance of the school

Teachers noted that the practices and policies of the head-teacher and school had an impact on whether parents were involved.

Yes, she [the head-teacher] is very, very helpful on that [getting parents involved]. More especially when there are meetings here at school. She emphasises that, "You parents, you must know that three quarters of the work is done by the child. The teacher does only one quarter and the child needs you. You also have to play a role. You don't have to come here at school because you are called, everyone can just come anytime, see how your child is performing. Take the teacher by surprise, take the child by surprise" (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Whenever we give them an assignment, there must be a signature to show that there is that cooperation. That way we find that if you are a relaxed parent, there is no way out, we can discover if you are not doing anything. So that way we find many parents are encouraged to help their students (Mr. Dladla, teacher, School D).

The parents whose children attended School D, noted that this school tried to involve them more than other schools that their children had attended previously.

...and also especially at that school. What I like about it, whatever they do they involve the parents. If they want to collect money they will always ask the parents what should be done and the parents will come up with ideas. It's

quite good. It's unlike other schools when they call parents just to say this is how we spend our money (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

In answer to the question, "What do you think the main reason is that parents don't get more involved?" Mr. Fakudze, a teacher at School E, replied:

Maybe it's the planning of the administration. They do not think it is much important. They think parents are just there to send the child to school and yet they can also contribute a lot to the smooth running of the school.

Discussion

Gettinger and Guetschow (1998:40) note that a major determinant of whether parents choose to be involved is the extent to which they perceive that the school wants them to, or feels they should, be involved. In practice Swap's Protective Model operated at these Swazi schools due to the limited opportunities parents were given to be involved (see 6.3.3.7). Parents were rarely invited to these schools and had no role in decision-making so it would be hardly surprising if some of them believed that the basic assumptions that underlie these models held true for them. Namely, that they were expected to delegate responsibility for their children's education to the school and that the educators accept this delegation of responsibility (Swap 1993:28). Parents have been found to become involved to the extent that they believe they have a role in their children's education (see 2.7.2.6). Some of these parents, as a result of the theoretical stances of these schools, may have found it easy to believe they did not have a role at all.

However, although practices at Schools B, C, D and E generally reflected the Protective Model, these schools formed a continuum between those that strictly practiced the Protective Model and School A, which practiced the Home-to-School Transmission Model (see 2.7.4.4).

School E strictly practiced the Protective Model. This school did not even involve parents in the very limited ways that they were involved in the other schools. The school had a policy of not giving children homework (see 6.2.5.2), parents played no role in fundraising (see 6.2.4.2) and were hardly ever invited to the school (see 6.2.4). The quantitative finding revealed that School E had the lowest levels of SIPI (see 5.5.8.1). Low school SES did not explain this finding (see 5.5.8.1). Teachers at this school felt that the school's administration (the head-teacher and deputy, there was no School Board) did not feel that parents had any role in their children's education and they felt this was one reason why parents were not involved. The quantitative results show that this school also had the lowest PIPI (see 5.5.8.2). This suggests that some parents may have accepted the stance of the school, that they should have no role in their children's education.

Teachers at School C complained that some parents were not aware that they had a responsibility in their children's education. This is hardly surprising since, although the teachers and head-teacher of School C did not believe that parents should be separated from the school, they provided very few opportunities for these parents to be involved. School C did not even have a PTA. To the teachers great surprise the quantitative data indicated that the parents at School C were the most involved in PIPI (see 5.5.8.2). One teacher, Mr. Nkunita, commented, "I don't think they responded with utmost faith". It is possible that while parents were given almost no opportunity to be involved at School C, they were highly involved in the home in ways which the teachers were not aware of. However, this would be surprising since they received little more than occasional verbal encouragement to be involved from the school. The school's SES was unrelated to its high PIPI (see 5.2.8.2).

Teachers at School D were most in favour of parent collaboration. The head-teacher had set in place several policies to ensure parental involvement. Parents

were represented through the School Board (see 6.2.6.1), they had to sign homework (see 6.2.5.2), and alternative dates were arranged to ensure parents attended parent-teacher meetings (see 6.2.4.1). The teachers at this school were noticeably the most positive about the contributions of parents. This may explain why this school had the highest level of SIPI (see 5.5.8.1). Surprisingly, this did not seem to increase parents' involvement in the activities under their own control, however, since this school did not have higher PIPI than the other schools (see 5.5.8.2).

It was not possible to see the quantitative effect of the theoretical stance of School's A and B on parent or school initiated involvement since the very small sample sizes from these schools resulted in the parental responses from both schools being combined for this analysis (see 5.5.8). The interviews revealed that these two schools, despite both being private, practiced different models of parental involvement. School B largely excluded parents from a role in their children's education and consequently practiced the Protective Model while School A practiced the School-to-Home Transmission Model (see 6.2 & 6.3.3.7).

At School A parents seemed to be viewed as clients (see 2.7.4.4). Parents were expected to accept the decisions of the professionals, the School Board and teachers, but this school tried to ensure that its clients understood these decisions. School A held a meeting once a year where it explained, superficially, to parents what the school was trying to do and what their role should be (see 6.2.3.3a). Teachers at this school said they would be happy to listen to parents and would respond to their views if they were in line with the professionals' judgements (see 6.2.6.4). Surveys were carried out at this school to test parents' responses (see 6.2.6.6). This school also attempted to enlist parental support in more ways and more frequently than the other schools, particularly in events at the school. Hence, at this school Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model, seemed to be in effect. Consequently, one would not expect parents of learners

at this school to feel that they could delegate responsibility for their children's education to the school. Nevertheless, teachers at this school also reported a small proportion of parents that did very little.

In conclusion, due to the limited opportunities these schools gave parents for involvement, these schools operated primarily from the stance of the Protective Model. As a result it is possible that some parents may have believed that the teachers and schools felt that parents had no role in their children's education, and thus delegated their responsibilities to the school. However, although most schools essentially practiced the Protective Model, varying attempts to involve parents were found at these schools.

Although levels of parental involvement were similar at most schools studied (see 5.9), the quantitative and qualitative results suggested that the specific theoretical stance of a school, and its consequent efforts to involve parents, does have an effect on parental involvement in ways that are under the school's control (SIPI). This probably results from the theoretical stance of the school determining which involvement opportunities are available to parents, and by making parents feel that their contributions are important and welcome. However, except in the extreme case of School E, the variations in the theoretical stances of the other schools could not be shown to have had an impact on the degree to which these parents were involved in activities which they could initiate independently of the school (PIPI). Nor was the SES of the schools responsible for differences in SIPI or PIPI between these schools (see 5.9).

This suggests that other factors played a role in the degree to which these parents were involved in their children's education. Even at School A, where parents could have no illusions about their responsibilities, a small group of parents was hardly involved at all.

d) Lack of understanding of parental involvement and its benefits

The parents interviewed knew that they had an important role to play in their children's education and were aware of the possible consequences of not playing this role.

My role in my children's education is very important because it is my aim for them to have as much a broad education as possible. I can't imagine after all of these children of mine are finished school and don't have anywhere to go and I have to take care of them. It's going to be a disaster, a disaster! I think its better I cope now with the school fees and the homework than suffering at a later stage (Mr. Nardu, parent, School C).

Some teachers, felt, however, that some parents simply did not know that they should be involved.

Ignorance can contribute. He [the parent] thinks that when you have sent the child to school that is it. "When I pay the school fees, the child has got uniform, that is fine. The teacher will do the rest" (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

All the teachers felt that parents cared for their children and their education and would be more involved if they knew what to do and were asked to help.

If we could get the ideas and tell them what to do, they will do it. I'm telling you. You find a parent coming, "Oh, what should I do, what should I do to help him or her" (Ms. Makhuba, Deputy, School D).

If we did ask for their [parents'] help they would actually want to respond. It's just a break in communication that causes all this. It not that they have that apathy. I think they actually could rise up to the occasion and say, "Alright lets meet up to what's required of us, lets try to help out." A lot of them would, because at the end of the day they are paying a lot of money and they want quality education (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

For Form 1 getting a high school is a problem. If your child gets a third [for his primary exams] you'll be struggling with your child. So the parents are so

serious. Ja! But some, its because of, they don't know (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Only one interviewee, a parent, felt that parents did not care.

"It is something to do with the culture here that the people don't care if the child goes to school or not. Seriously, its just like that. They don't value education" (Mr. Razibuhoro, parent, School D).

Discussion

Teachers at these schools felt that parents took their children's education seriously and wanted their children to excel. It seems unlikely, in view of these teachers' comments that many parents simply did not care, as Mr. Razibuhoro felt was the case. Teachers felt that many parents wanted to help and simply were not involved because, like some South African parents (Jantjes1995:297), they did not recognise the value of their involvement and did not know how to get involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:316) point out that for parents to be involved they must have a strong sense of personal efficacy for involving themselves in their children's education (see 2.7.2.6).

The parents that attended the workshops expressed amazement at the variety of ways that they could be involved (personal observation). They stated repeatedly that they hadn't realised their involvement mattered so much. Specifically, parents did not fully realise the importance of positive reinforcement of their children's successes, not pressurizing their children, creating a time-table for afternoon activities, and family discussion at meal times (personal observation). Many parents came and thanked the researcher after the presentation and said that they felt that they had really benefited from it.

The parents interviewed had some sense of personal efficacy; they knew that their involvement made a positive difference to their children's education. Their sense of efficacy probably explains the fairly high levels at which they were

involved (see 6.2.8.1). However, their responses indicated that even these parents did not fully realise how beneficial to their children their involvement in some types of activities could be (see 6.2.8.2). Further, these parents were generally satisfied with their levels of involvement and had not even heard of some types of parental involvement including volunteering at the school, home visits, and home packages of learning materials. The interviewed parents were astounded by, and disapproved of, the fact that in some foreign countries parents make important decisions about their children's education (see 6.2.6.8). They had never heard of this and they placed great trust in teachers, as the professionals, where the making of decisions was concerned (see 6.2.6). Crozier (1999a:315) notes that this results in parental passivity. Despite these parents' high levels of education (see Table 4.6) they felt they did not have a positive contribution to make to decisions and did not feel they needed to play a role (see 6.2.6.8). Although the workshops only introduced the most basic concepts of parental involvement (see Appendix V), these parents felt that they had learned a lot (see 6.2.2.1). This lack of knowledge about parent involvement, and the parents lack of a full appreciation of their contribution to their children's education, probably accounts for the interviewed parents rather limited concept of what parents should be doing (see 6.2.8.2).

Since teachers did not teach parents about parental involvement (see 6.3.3.3), and a culture of parental involvement does not exist in Swaziland (see 6.3.3.7), it is likely that some parents knew virtually nothing about it. Research suggests that parents who are not involved are those that have not realised that they are a critical part of their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan 1991:31). Differences in the levels of parent involvement in various activities (see 6.2.8.2) may reflect the parents' beliefs on how important their involvement is to their children's academic success. Parents may believe that they can contribute to their children's academic success a great deal by helping with and supervising homework but very little by attending parent-teacher meetings (see 6.2.8.1).

e) Summary

Some Swazi parents did not recognise that they had any role in their children's education. They may have believed this because they felt that the payment of high school fees absolved them of responsibility, especially those parents whose children attended Schools A, B and C. Alternatively, the practice of Swap's Protective Model by most of the schools may have led some parents to believe that they should not have much of a role in their children's education. Finally, Swazi parents, like some South African parents, may simply have been unaware that they could make a positive contribution to their children's education. Parents were unaware of many of the ways they could be involved. Parents at the workshops were delighted to learn what they could do to help.

Nevertheless, even if Swazi parents fully realise the benefits of their involvement, and are fully committed to being involved, they face many barriers to their involvement.

6.3.5 Barriers to parental involvement

6.3.5.1 *Introduction*

Identification of significant barriers to parental involvement is a critical step towards developing effective home-school partnerships (Gettinger & Geutschow 1998:40).

6.3.5.2 *Less educated parents may be excluded*

Most teachers felt that the majority of parents were educated enough to help their children (see 6.2.5.2).

The curriculum is very basic. Parents can help their children quite easily. The parents here are educated (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

Most can help, but some give you a note "I was poor in Maths, please give all the help" (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

Teachers felt that the involvement of educated parents was particularly beneficial and that less educated parents were less involved.

I can see that if we can involve them we can achieve a lot because some of our parents here are educated. Some of them are lecturers, some are even ministers (Mr. Fakudze, teacher, School E).

The parents that are less involved are the less educated ones, that's one thing I've noticed (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

Discussion

Most teachers felt that parents were sufficiently educated to help their children. Even those teachers that preferred parents not to help with homework (see 6.2.5.2) did not feel that parents' lack of general education was the problem, rather they felt the parents did not know how to help. This makes sense in the light of the quantitative findings, which indicated that most parents had secondary or tertiary education and that, in contrast to South Africa (see 3.4.4.1), illiteracy was not generally a barrier to parental involvement in this community (see 5.5.2). Moreover, around two-thirds of the parents felt they could help their children in reading and mathematics (see 5.7.4).

The quantitative results (see 5.5.2) indicated that teachers did not discriminate between parents who had secondary education and those who had tertiary education, in terms of the extent to which they tried to involve them (SIPI). However, the teachers interviewed definitely felt that involving the most educated parents would be most beneficial, and that less educated parents tended to be more resistant to involvement and to value education less. The lack of a significant difference between the SIPI of secondary and tertiary parents

(see 5.5.2) may simply reflect the fact that most schools made very little attempt to involve any parents.

For a number of types of involvement including helping with homework (see 6.2.5.2), giving presentations (see 6.2.4.5), and decision-making (see 6.2.6.7), teachers stated that parents' contributions would be valuable since they were "learned". This implies that the contributions of less educated parents would not be valued as highly and that they may even be excluded from these types of parental involvement on the grounds that they could not contribute. This is exactly what School A had done in terms of parents working in the classroom. They excluded all but a tiny minority of parents whom they felt were sufficiently educated (see 6.2.4.5). Thus, Swazi teachers, like teachers in other communities who did not frequently involve parents (Epstein & Dauber 1991:290), seemed to make negative stereotypic judgements about the involvement of less educated parents. Consequently, while lack of education would probably not discourage the majority of parents from getting involved, since most parents were highly educated, parents with little education may find themselves excluded from many types of involvement.

6.3.5.3 *Lack of parent confidence*

Although most teachers and parents felt parents could cope with the level of difficulty of the primary curriculum (see 6.3.5.2), parents did not always feel confident about **how** to help their children in learning activities in the home (see 6.2.5.4). They were not always sure of which technique to use, or approach to take, when helping children with their homework.

So even the parents think "I'll confuse my child, I'll leave it to the teacher (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Sometimes I don't help because at Primary level the way you are explaining maths, maybe the way you are teaching, is not the way you would teach Form 1 (Ms. Dlamini, parent, School D).

Further, a minority of parents did not feel they were able to cope with the level of difficulty of some of the primary work, particularly in mathematics (see quote 6.3.5.2). Teachers felt that these parents did not help their children with homework because they feared revealing their ignorance in some topics to their children. Teachers claimed that this fear was particularly prevalent amongst parents from their own culture, namely African parents.

I think it goes back to a cultural thing, a traditional thing. You know as Africans we would always like to have a situation where the parent knows better than the child. So you'll avoid a situation where the child can outsmart you. So the best thing is, "Do your homework, I'll check it", but not discuss (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

Discussion

Foreign studies have shown that lack of parental confidence forms a barrier to parental involvement (see 2.7.2.6). This also seems to be the case in Swaziland. Although most parents were educated and felt that they could help with reading and mathematics (see 5.7.4), the interviews revealed that parents were not always confident about **how** to help their children. This may have resulted in parents attempting to conform to the teachers' methods (see 6.2.5.2) such that the parents' unique talents and abilities were not utilised. This decreases the effectiveness of parental involvement (Edwards & Warin 1999:336). Alternatively, lack of confidence on how to help may have prevented some parents from helping at all. Even Ms. Dlamini, a high school teacher, was not confident of her ability to help her primary school child and sometimes did not try because she was not she would use the correct method.

Further, the small proportion of parents who lacked confidence in their ability to cope with primary school work, particularly in mathematics, may also have avoided involvement in school-work as they may have feared that revealing their ignorance would result in their children losing respect for them.

6.3.5.4 Learners did not recognise parental authority

Teachers and parents complained that the children did not always recognise the parents' authority to assist them with learning activities in the home.

At times the kids feel that we are old to teach them. That's one thing I've realised. You try and tell them, "You don't do this like this", [and they reply] "No you can't tell me, the teacher said we must do it this way. (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

Sometimes when we give the homework the child says, "No Mommy, my teacher says we don't do it like that, we do it like this (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Discussion

Some children did not believe that their parents were able to help them with schoolwork. This put parents off trying to help them with schoolwork. This learner perception also reflects the absence of a culture of parental involvement in this community. Learners did not always perceive a role for their parents in learning activities in the home.

6.3.5.5 Parental frustration and annoyance

Teachers and parents (see 6.2.2.1) noted that parents sometimes became frustrated and annoyed when trying to help their children with learning activities in the home and that this put some parents off helping their children.

Some parents say "I can't help him, he is so playful. He cannot sit still so I get fed up" and one child, I asked him, I said, "Did you ask Dad to help you with

this” and the child said, “Daddy said he won’t help me with this anymore because I can’t learn” (Ms. Nsibande, teacher, School C).

Mr. Tsabedze, a parent whose child attended School D, complained that his wife was reluctant to help their children with homework because she became too angry with them.

Discussion

Parental frustration and annoyance while assisting with home learning activities seemed to be quite common since almost all the parents interviewed mentioned that they became frustrated and annoyed when their children did not seem to be learning. In some case parents’ feelings of frustration and anger may have prevented them from getting involved with their children’s schoolwork.

6.3.5.6 Inability to speak English

Teachers complained that a small proportion of parents, especially Portuguese-speaking parents from Mozambique, were unable to help their children with homework because they could not speak English.

Most of the parents help with homework. But here in Swaziland we have parents that don’t understand English, for instance those coming from Mozambique. They can’t read English so we are having a problem with the child here (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

Discussion

Language differences have been found to create a formidable communication barrier between the parent and school (see 2.7.2.7). Most parents in this community spoke either English or siSwati at home. Despite the fact that these schools taught and communicated in English, no difference was found between the involvement of English- and siSwati-speaking parents (see 5.5.3). siSwati-speaking parents also responded well to notes written by the school in English (see 6.2.3.4). It was not surprising that siSwati-speaking parents were not at a disadvantage because most could speak good English since they were well

educated (see 5.5.3). The siSwati-speaking parents interviewed spoke good English. Further, since cultural-ethnic congruency existed between siSwati speaking parents and the teachers this may have encouraged their involvement (see 5.5.3). Cultural differences did not present a barrier to English-speaking parents, possibly because they were not socioeconomically disadvantaged and did not suffer from communication barriers (see 5.5.3). Thus, language and cultural differences did not present a barrier to the involvement of the majority of parents; those parents who spoke either siSwati or English.

Nevertheless, language differences may have formed a barrier to the involvement of some of the parents who formed part of the 7% of the parent population who spoke other languages at home (see Table 4.2). Teacher reports suggested that many of these parents were Portuguese-speaking and that these parents often could not speak English. These parents may have experienced difficulty communicating with the school since the schools sent home letters in English and held meetings in English. Teachers noted that these parents were not able to help their children with schoolwork, since this was also done in English at these schools.

6.3.5.7 *Work commitments*

Teachers noted that in most households both parents were employed. They came home late and were tired. As a result they either could not or would not help their children with homework.

I think that there is really a big factor which is the fact that they are working. Some of them don't get back till half past six, seven O'clock at night. The child doesn't work well at that time so it's very difficult for them to be involved (Ms. Crawford, teacher, School A).

They come home after a tough day tired, and they want to unwind a little bit, relax a little bit. They want to see what is happening [on TV] and have supper

and after that “Aagh, get your sister or brother to help you” and they head off to the room and that’s it (Mr. Fortune, teacher, School B).

The parents interviewed noted that work commitments sometimes made home supervision and attendance at school events difficult. The parents nevertheless, tried to be involved.

We are in a factory. At times it [meetings] coincides with my work. So maybe we’ll split, my wife will go. One will try to go (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

Sometimes I work here up to six, six-thirty, seven, at the moment I go home I just give my time to them, I’m there for their disposal (Mr. Nardu, parent, School C).

Sometimes, when I get home [late] the work is not done. She has been playing (Ms. Nxumalo, parent, School C).

Mr. Reed, a teacher at School A, noted that those parents most involved at the school were those that were not working.

You get parents who are perceived as interested because they are here at school a lot, but its just a whole lot of mothers who are bored and have nothing else to do. You get other parents who are working extremely hard, they are maybe more interested but they don’t necessarily have time to come to the school.

Discussion

A number of studies have shown time constraints and inflexible work schedules to be the most significant barrier to parental involvement (see 2.7.2.7). Every teacher and parent mentioned time constraints, mostly due to work pressures, as a barrier to parental involvement. Many of these participants claimed it was the most important barrier. Unfortunately, as is the case in many countries (Ascher 1988:115), Swazi employers seem to be rigid about the time and hours they demand from their workers. Moreover, like teachers in South Africa (see 3.4.4.1), Swazi teachers felt that in most households both parents worked and got home

late and tired. As a result teachers believed that parents may have felt too tired to help their children with homework or could not help with it because their children had already done it earlier. The parents interviewed noted that it was difficult for them to supervise their children's time as they worked late and that this also made it hard for them to attend some meetings. Nevertheless, they still managed to be involved suggesting that if the parent is sufficiently committed this barrier can be overcome.

Mr. Reed of School A noted that those parents most commonly present at school events were the housewives (since other schools held events so infrequently they could not be expected to notice this relationship). This suggests, as has been found in other studies (see 2.7.2.3), that non-working parents are more involved at the school. However, this does not mean these parents are more involved in all ways. Research has, in fact, shown that working parents tend to participate in more home involvement activities than non-working parents (see 2.7.2.3).

The teachers felt that most parents had to work. Not a single teacher mentioned unemployment at all during the interviews. This supports the quantitative finding that most urban Swazi parents are employed and that unemployment is not a barrier to the involvement of the majority of parents (see 5.5.4). This contrasts with the situation in South Africa where unemployment has been found to be an important barrier to the involvement of parents (see 3.4.4.1). In these Swazi families, when one parent was unemployed this was probably a matter of choice based on the high SES of the family not requiring both parents to work.

6.3.5.8 Family and community commitments

Teachers and parents mentioned a number of family and community commitments that interfered with parental involvement.

Normally we now have a very high death rate. They [the parents] give notification before the time that "On this date we are having a family funeral and we cannot come" it is well understood (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

In our culture we've got extended family so you know there is much tearing apart of the parent, when he reaches home he must see to this, he must see to that (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

We've got commitments and we've got extended families. You find that these days people are dying like flies. So maybe I have to attend a certain funeral. At times you say "Mom please go there [to the school event], I'm going to attend this funeral" I don't want to be political [*laughs*]. Its like you know when the community has called, the chief has said "We must do this", then everyone must go and do it in that community (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

Discussion

Like South African parents (see 3.4.4.1), Swazi parents have many social commitments. Funerals are very common in this community and Swazi's also have obligations to their local Chief, which cannot be neglected (see 3.2). These commitments made it particularly difficult for them to attend events at the school on weekends. However, teachers and parents reported that the presence of extended family in the home often meant the parents did not need to arrange babysitters when they were free to attend school events. Further, because the majority of teachers and parents came from the same racial-ethnic community (see 4.2.4.1), teachers had many of the same commitments as parents and were sympathetic of the barriers to involvement faced by parents.

6.3.5.9 Single parents may be excluded

In response to a question on what may prevent parents from becoming involved, all teachers responded that single parents were under more strain and were less likely to be involved.

We also have a lot of single parent families. Where, you know, one parent is doing everything and they just have no time (Ms. Wade, head-teacher, School C).

Single parents, she is not married and the responsibility gets more difficult. She has four children and the four children must be going on the combi and she can't even afford to pay the fees. Lots of things on these parents (Ms. Costa, teacher, School B).

I've also noticed here that a lot of them come from single parent homes, its very common here. You can actually single them out in class, believe it or not, those that come from homes with both parents and those that come from single parent homes (Mr. Nkunita, teacher, School C).

Discussion

The teachers felt that single parents had less time and were under more stress and, thus were less likely to be involved. As a result, these teachers may decide in advance, as has been found in other communities (Scott-Jones 1987:271), that single parents cannot be approached or relied on. Although SIPI was the similar for married and single groups (see 5.5.5) this may be more because these schools hardly made any attempts to involve any parents rather than because teachers were not discriminating against single parents.

No significant difference was actually found between the PIPI of single and married parents (see 5.5.5). However, these results may be misleading as teachers noted that in many homes, despite the fact that parents were actually married, only one parent was present. In fact, they believed that married parents living separately were very common in this community. One parent, usually the mother, lived with the children, while the other parent lived close to his place of work. Mothers in these families would be likely to have fewer financial pressures than single parents, but like them, would shoulder most of the responsibilities. Thus, a difference may exist between the involvement of parents in homes

where two parents are usually present and those in homes where one parent is usually present.

6.3.5.10 *Children did not always live with their parents*

Some teachers noted that some children did not live with their parents and that this prevented their parents from being involved.

I have discovered that some of them are not staying with their parents. They are staying with anybody that is close to the school (Mr. Dladla, teacher, School D).

Some of the children, they are not living with their parents. Parents don't know about the school. The children live with the grannies and the grannies don't know about that positive attitude [to education] (Ms. Makuba, teacher, School D).

Discussion

South African educators noted that not living with their children was a barrier to parental involvement (Mkwanazi, 1994:27). Some Swazi children live with other relatives. This may be due to the Swazi practice of trying to get a child into the best possible school regardless of where the parent lives (see 3.2). Teachers felt this prevented parents from being involved and that they may not even be aware of what was going on at the school. Further, teachers did not believe the grandparents, with whom these children often lived, were able to assume the parents' role effectively.

6.3.5.11 *The perception that the involvement of only one parent per household is necessary.*

It was clear from the responses of most parents that usually only one parent attended meetings or helped with homework. Parents did not try to excuse or explain the non-involvement of the other parent.

In most cases I go [to meetings]. Its only maybe when I'm not in a position to go I ask her [my wife] (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

Teachers noted that the involvement of only one parent sometimes caused misunderstandings between the parent and teacher.

The mother would sit down and talk. She was always coming, constantly. So we finally decided the child should repeat the class. The just before we closed I was called by the head-teacher. The father went straight to her and said the teacher said the child should repeat, he doesn't understand why. I was shocked. I didn't know this man I only knew the one parent of the child (Ms. Nsibande, teacher, School C).

Discussion

Although all of the parents interviewed were married and lived with their spouses, it became clear that often only one parent was heavily involved in the children's education or that the parents took turns to be involved. It was rare for both parents to attend an event. No couples were present at either workshop (personal observation). In view of these parents' work and social commitments this was unsurprising. However, most of the parents interviewed did not feel that more than one parent needed to be involved. This perception acts as a barrier to the full involvement of both parents. Teachers noted that having only one parent involved could lead to communication problems since they had often only formed a relationship with one parent and the other parent may have had little understanding of what was going on in the school.

6.3.5.12 Older parents and fathers

Only one parent, and no teachers, mentioned age as a barrier to parental involvement.

It depends on the age group of the parent because I think older parents, parents in their 40's, take it [parental involvement] more seriously. Younger ones think they are just wasting their time (Mr. Tsabedze, parent, School D).

Discussion

This observation was contrary to the quantitative findings, which showed that parents over 40 years of age initiated the least involvement (see 5.5.9.2). This may have been because older parents generally hold more traditional, limited views of their role at the school (see 5.5.9.2). However, the above quote illustrates, as would be expected, that some older parents are deeply aware of their responsibility to be involved in their children's education. None of the other teachers or parents mentioned age as a barrier to parental involvement.

The teachers did not specifically mention parent gender. This suggests that they were not biased against involving either fathers or mothers. This finding was supported by the quantitative results, which indicated that they made similar efforts to involve mothers and fathers (see 5.5.10). However, teachers' accounts indicated further that the majority of parents involved were women. Again this finding was supported by the quantitative data which revealed that, as is usually the case (Reay 1995:337), mothers were more involved than fathers in PIFI (see 5.5.10). This is probably because parental involvement, especially in the activities that can be initiated by parents, is generally considered a maternal role (see 5.5.10). However, fathers made up 40% of the workshop participants. Nevertheless, Reay (1995:346) points out that often many of the men present at school events are there because their wives encouraged them to go. Even so, the four men interviewed were more involved than their wives, and the teacher's mentioned many conversations and interactions with fathers. Thus, in this community although mothers were generally more involved there did not seem to be strict role delineation that reserved parental involvement exclusively for mothers. None of the fathers interviewed felt they had to explain or apologise for their involvement.

6.3.5.13 *Transport*

Teachers did not feel that a lack of transport would prevent parents from attending events at the school.

No, in Manzini with the community we are in, transport is not a problem at all. Because normally our meetings are not at night. They cater for everybody. The public transport is their so even if you are not mobile everyone is covered (Ms. Malaza, teacher, School D).

Discussion

The teachers did not feel transport problems, such as have been found in South African communities (see 3.4.4.1), formed a barrier to parental involvement in this community. None of them mentioned this as a possible reason for lack of involvement and they dismissed this possibility when questioned. None of the parents, interviewed complained about transport problems or felt these may effect the involvement of other parents.

6.3.5.14 *Poor planning of events*

A number of parents noted that events at the school had to be carefully planned so that parents could attend.

I think its also the time [that the event is held] If maybe the times were after hours or on weekends then some would make time for such meetings. Funerals are usually scheduled from 07h00 to 10h00 so if the meeting is at 13h00 its OK. Timing is crucial. I think for this workshop the information was given at short notice. I only heard on Friday. When you get that invitation you already have plans (Mr. Kunene, parent, School C).

Discussion

Various authors have noted that for events at schools to be well attended they must be well planned (Stouffer 1992:6; Swap 1992:70). Since these parents, like those in South Africa (see 3.4.4.1), had many work and social commitments, this seems to be especially true in this community. The head-teachers at Schools C

and D chose the time they felt would suit parents best for the workshops. However, the head-teachers did not seem to be aware of what suited the parents as nearly every parent interviewed complained that these meetings were too close to lunch. Since these schools lacked home-to-school communication (see 6.2.3.4), it is not surprising that head-teachers did not know the times that suited parents best. Parents also felt they had only been told in the last minute.

6.3.5.15 *Teacher-parent relationships*

Parents and teachers felt they had very friendly caring relationships with each other.

Myself, I am friendly with the parents. To me they turn out to be my sisters, my uncles, my what, what. Like my surname has got a bit off your surname so I say you are my uncle. So that the parents from afar say, "That is my teacher, the teacher of my child" [*pointing into the distance*]. So I believe the closer we come then the relationship, even the child starts to relax, and the parents believe in you. I believe that one can help very much (Ms. Dube, teacher, School D).

I think the relationship is a good one, they are caring. Every one of them. Even the head-mistress (Ms. Dlamini, parent, School D).

Discussion

Although teachers complained that parents were occasionally bossy or blamed them for a child's failures, they generally felt that they had very good relationships with the parents, and had a great deal of difficulty thinking of negative incidents. The parents, without exception, claimed to have good relationships with the teachers, and ascribed some of their children's academic successes to them. The teachers' and parents' positive assessment of their relationship corresponded with the quantitative data, which showed that parents felt welcome, had very positive attitudes to the school, and felt the school had the same goals as they did (see 5.6). This was not unexpected since the majority of teachers and parents came from the same racial-ethnic community (see

4.2.4.1). This helped them to understand each other (see 6.3.5.8) and ensured congruency between the values and goals of teachers and parents. However, it was of concern that despite the fact that these were some of the most involved parents, not all of the parents knew the names of their child's class teacher. This indicates that while the relationships were friendly, they may not have always been close.

6.3.6 Conclusions: Parents beliefs, knowledge, understanding and views of parental involvement and barriers to their involvement

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995:313-318) note that the most critical factor determining whether parents are involved in their children's education is whether they perceive this to be part of their role and the extent to which they believe they can make a positive contribution. This study indicates that some parents may have felt that they had little or no role because they paid high school fees or as a result of the psychological impact of the practice of Swap's Protective Model by most of these schools. Further, even the most involved parents, who clearly had well-developed senses of personal efficacy, knew little about parental involvement. This limited the ways they could be involved as well as their perception of their role. It seems likely that many other parents simply were not fully aware of the benefits of their involvement and that this limited their involvement. Even the most committed Swazi parents, however, face other barriers to involvement (see Table 6.1).

Some of these barriers seem to be widespread and interfere with the involvement of parents in many countries and communities. These include lack of parent confidence (see 2.7.2.6) as well as parental frustration and annoyance while helping (see 2.9.2). Like parents in most countries (see 2.7.2.3), work commitments may form a barrier to the involvement of Swazi parents at the

school. The results, however, suggest that work commitments may also form a barrier to their involvement in home learning activities and supervision. As is the case in many countries (see 2.7.2.5), parental involvement in Swaziland is gendered. However, although mothers tended to be more commonly involved, this role was not reserved exclusively for mothers in this community. Almost all parents of children at these schools were highly educated and spoke English fluently. The majority of parents were also married. However, uneducated and single parents may be excluded from some types of parental involvement, as has been found in other communities (Epstein & Dauber 1991:290), due to teachers' negative stereotypic judgements. Further, lack of ability to communicate in English is likely to be a barrier to the involvement of Portuguese-speaking Mozambican parents.

Barriers to parental involvement in Swaziland that have not been mentioned previously by studies in other countries include the necessity for parents to prioritise the demands of their Chief over any school commitments, and the perception amongst parents that the involvement of only one parent is necessary.

Other barriers that seem to be particularly prevalent in southern Africa (see 3.4.4.1) include parents' commitments to their extended families, frequent funerals, the absence of one parent due to work commitments, aged parents, and children living with persons other than their parents.

However, in contrast to South Africa (see 3.4.4.1), illiteracy and unemployment are not barriers for the majority of parents, and factional fighting and low teacher morale are not present in this community. Lack of transport, a common barrier in other communities (see 2.7.2.7), was also not a barrier. Racial-ethnic differences between minority English speaking-parents and teachers were not a

barrier to the involvement of these parents, possibly because they are not socioeconomically disadvantaged and did not face communication barriers.

Moles (in Morris & Taylor 1998:221) states that differences between parents and teachers in culture, life-style, values and experiences is a major barrier to effective teacher-parent relations. Swazi teachers and parents had good relationships, positive attitudes to each other, and similar goals. This is probably largely as a result of the racial-ethnic homogeneity of the parent-teacher community. Thus, cultural congruency exists between the majority of parents and the school, and cultural differences are not a barrier to the involvement of the majority of Swazi parents. Moreover, contrary to some foreign studies but in accordance with others (see 2.7.2.1), parents of different SES had similar levels of involvement.

Barriers to the involvement of parents in urban primary education in Swaziland are summarised in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Barriers to parental involvement in Swazi primary education

Factor	Proportion of parents for which the factor is a barrier		
	Many	Some	Very few to none
1. Lack of parental understanding of parental involvement and its benefits	✓		
2. Lack of parent confidence/sense of efficacy	✓		
3. Parents' work commitments	✓		
4. Parents' commitments to extended family	✓		
5. Parents' commitments to their Chief	✓		
6. Frequent funerals	✓		
7. Parental perception that the involvement of one parent is sufficient	✓		
8. Poor planning of events	✓		
9. Learners do not recognize parents' authority to assist them with home learning activities		✓	
10. Parental frustration and annoyance		✓	
11. Parent gender (fathers are less involved)		✓	
12. Parental age over 40 years		✓	
13. Single parenthood		✓	
14. One parent absent due to work commitments		✓	
15. Children not living with their parents		✓	
16. Parents' home language different from language of school			✓
17. Parents form part of a racial-ethnic minorities			✓
18. Parental illiteracy or lack of education			✓
19. Parental unemployment			✓
20. Lack of parent-school congruency			✓
21. Low parental SES			✓
22. Poor teacher-parent relationships			✓
23. Lack of transport for parents			✓
24. Factional fighting			✓
25. Low teacher morale			✓

6.4 Parental involvement in Swazi urban primary schools: Conclusions

This study, like others (Epstein in Christenson *et al* 1992a:41), showed that there is **little correlation between teachers' attitudes towards parent involvement and their actual practices**. Swap 1993:27 notes, "Whether or not teachers reach out to parents of children in their classrooms is dictated by policy (written or unwritten), custom or culture as much or more than by their individual inclinations". Teachers did not object to the lack of opportunities for parent involvement at these schools, and they did not make the effort to encourage parents to become involved. As a result very few channels for home to school communication existed at these schools and parents could not volunteer at the schools, make decisions or attend parenting workshops. The parents also had very few, infrequent opportunities to attend events at most of the schools. However, the teachers interviewed, would have liked parents to come and talk to them, supervise homework, find out how to help their children at home, volunteer in the classroom, fundraise, attend meetings and events, and make decisions on matters from uniform to the curriculum.

Thus, a discrepancy exists between what is practiced by the school and teachers, who seem to follow Swap's Protective theoretical stance, and the teachers' attitudes, which reflect more closely Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model. As other researchers (Christenson *et al* 1992a:41) have found, reasons for this may include time constraints and a lack of external rewards, since these teachers worked very hard and were under a great deal of stress. However, unlike teachers in some other studies (Christenson *et al* 1992a:41), these teachers did not feel that most parents lacked the commitment or the necessary education to be involved, although some teachers were concerned that parents did not always know how to help. Nor did teachers feel parental involvement jeopardised their professional status (Epstein 1986:277). **Instead, the main reason for this discrepancy between the attitudes**

and the practices of the teachers seems to stem from their complete lack of knowledge of parental involvement and the absence of a culture of parental involvement in Swaziland.

Globally, teachers are rarely adequately trained in parental involvement. However **Swazi teachers do not even know what parental involvement is, they were not familiar with techniques of parental involvement and they did not fully appreciate its benefits.** As a result they did not view involving parents as either their responsibility or part of their role, made no attempt to teach parents how to be involved, and were willing to allow their schools to practice the Protective Model and keep school and parents separated. Epstein (1991:345) states that "most schools embrace the concepts of partnership and parent involvement". However, these schools, with the possible exception of School A, which practiced Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model, were not even aware of the concept of parental involvement. Even after teachers became aware of parental involvement, their lack of knowledge of it and the benefits of partnership with parents lead them to envisage the supportive, subordinate role for parents defined by Swap's School-to-Home Transmission model rather than true partnership.

This ignorance of parental involvement amongst teachers and head-teachers stems from the lack of a parent involvement component in teacher training. This in turn stems from the Ministry of Education's lack of awareness of parental involvement. As a result training in parental involvement is currently not required for teacher certification. In addition education policy only includes an extremely limited role for parents and even this role is not implemented in Swazi schools. Moreover, the inclusion of many educational decisions in the mandate of the Ministry of Education effectively prevents parents from being partners in their children's education by excluding them from most decision-making. Lack of awareness of parental involvement and

corresponding policy also allows the school boards of private schools to exclude parents from decision-making and prevents a culture of parental involvement from developing in Swaziland. While authors in other countries complain that parental involvement is more often rhetoric than reality (Christenson 1992a:179), in Swaziland this concept has not yet entered rhetoric.

Schools, the Ministry of Education and/or school boards prevented parents from getting involved in many ways. Nevertheless, not all parents took the opportunities they had to be involved. Most parents supervised and helped with homework, held home discussions, attended PTA meetings and other events at the school (when these were held), and responded to written communication from the school. However, many parents did not attend parent-teacher meetings or communicate personally with their children's teachers or frequently help their children prepare for tests, discuss TV programmes with them, or carry out reading activities with them. Even the interviewed parents, who were highly involved in many of the ways available to them, did not want any role in most decisions, had difficulty supervising their children, did not play educational games with them, and were not sure if they had the time to volunteer at school. These parents, unlike those with similar limited involvement in other studies (Hanafin & Lynch 2002:35), were satisfied with their limited opportunities for involvement. Further, teachers reported that a small group of parents were not involved in any way and did not even meet their basic obligations. **Thus, as a result of limited opportunities for involvement and because parents did not always take the opportunities they had to be involved, very little parental involvement occurred at these schools.** The only exception was private School A which had a slightly higher, though still very limited degree of parental involvement since parents were invited to many events at the school and most did attend these events.

Parents knew very little about parental involvement since teachers did not teach parents how to be involved or even that they should be involved, and parents had had no other exposure to the concept of parental involvement. Consequently, it is not surprising that some parents seemed to feel that they had no, or only a very limited, role in their children's education. This belief stemmed from one of the following views: 1) paying high school fees absolved parents from playing a role, 2) the Protective theoretical stance of most of the schools, or 3) simply a lack of belief that parents could contribute positively to their children's education. **Even the most involved parents did not fully appreciate the benefits of parental involvement and were not aware of the full range of ways that they could be involved.** This limited their involvement.

Swaziland is a unique community with its own unique set of barriers to parental involvement. Barriers to parental involvement that Swaziland shares with many other communities include lack of parental sense of efficacy/confidence, parental frustration and annoyance when helping with learning activities, parental work commitments, and the gendered nature of parental involvement. Adoption by teachers of negative stereotypes about less educated and single parents, is also a barrier to the involvement of a minority of parents and a few parents may suffer from language barriers.

This study also revealed barriers not previously mentioned by other researchers. These included the necessity for Swazi parents to prioritise the demands of the Chiefs over the demands of the school and the parental perception that only one parent need be involved. Barriers common to southern Africa include commitments to extended families, attendance at frequent funerals, the absence of one parent due to work commitments and learners not living with their parents.

Although little parental involvement occurs currently in this urban Swazi community a number of factors favour the implementation of a programme of parental involvement. Barriers such as illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, factional fighting, transport problems and low teacher morale, while prevalent in South Africa are virtually absent in this community. Further, low SES did not present a barrier to involvement, and teachers and the vast majority of parents are part of the same racial-ethnic community. **Differences in culture, race, life-styles and experiences that create real or assumed barriers to communication and partnerships, and distance parents and teachers (Keyes 2002:179) are absent in this community.** Teachers and parents had good relationships, similar values and positive attitudes to each other. Further, the teachers' readiness to adopt Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model, which provides parents with a far greater role in their children's education, suggests that these teachers would be open to involving parents far more widely; particularly, if they knew how to do so and fully appreciated the benefits of this. Thus, these teachers are probably open to involving parents according to the dictates of the School-to-Home Transmission Model. Moreover, Swap (1993:37) notes that the School-to-Home Transmission Model can provide a framework for the transition between a Protective stance with parents and a more collaborative one.

Chapter 7 presents recommendations for a parental involvement programme for Swazi urban primary schools based on the combined quantitative and qualitative findings and conclusions, revealed in the current chapter, and the literature review (see Chapters 2 & 3).

Chapter **7**

Recommendations for a parental involvement programme for urban primary schools in Swaziland

"To be effective, research shows family-involvement programs have to be well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting" (Henderson in Jones 2001:22).

7.1 Introduction

A wealth of research indicates that parental involvement is of great benefit to learners, and their teachers and parents. Comprehensive parental involvement including parenting, communication, involvement in home learning activities, involvement at the school, decision-making, and community collaboration is most beneficial. Parenting and involvement in home learning activities have been shown to have the greatest impact on the academic achievement of learners. In fact, the learning success of children has been found to correlate more closely with these factors than family background factors. Nevertheless, research has shown a relationship between various family background factors and the degree and type of parental involvement. Barriers to parental involvement operate in many communities. Further, various other factors relating to the child and government have been found to influence the extent and ways in which parents are involved. However, the most important determinant of parental involvement has been found to be the effort of teachers and schools to involve parents (see Chapter 2).

Despite the prioritisation of education in Swaziland, the needs of all Swazi learners are not being met. This is largely as a result of financial constraints. Nevertheless, education policy in Swaziland describes only a very limited role for parents and does not supply the means to implement this policy. Research suggests that parental involvement in southern African communities results in many of the same benefits as it does in other countries. Further, parental involvement is cost effective. This suggests that the deficiencies in the Swazi education system may be addressed effectively by the implementation of a parental involvement programme (see Chapter 3). Such a programme would require a thorough knowledge of parental involvement in this community.

In order to fully investigate parental involvement in urban primary schools in Swaziland, a combined quantitative and qualitative approach was taken. Parents

were asked to complete a self-rating questionnaire, which was used to statistically test a number of hypotheses about the involvement of parents with different family backgrounds in their children's education. Further, the parents' responses to the items on this questionnaire indicated their attitude to the school as well as strengths and weaknesses in their involvement and in the efforts of the schools to involve them. Moreover, a small group of teachers and parents were interviewed following an ethnographic approach in order to obtain a more detailed and in-depth perspective of parental involvement.

The combined quantitative and qualitative findings (see Chapters 5 & 6) revealed very limited parental involvement in urban primary education in Swaziland. Generally, teachers and schools practiced Swap's Protective Model, largely as a result of a lack of knowledge and understanding of parental involvement. This in turn stemmed from the lack of a Government policy on parental involvement, particularly the lack of the requirement of the completion of a course on parental involvement for teacher certification. The Ministry of Education also excluded parents from most decision-making. Since teachers knew very little about parental involvement they did not recognise or assume their role of involving parents and teaching them how to be involved. Consequently, parents had little understanding of parental involvement and its benefits and thus, did not always choose to be involved. A number of barriers further interfered with their involvement. For a more comprehensive summary of these findings see section 6.4.

In this chapter, recommendations for the design of a parental involvement programme for Swazi urban senior primary schools, and the implications these recommendations have for the major role players in education, are presented. These recommendations are based on the combined quantitative and qualitative findings and the literature review. The limitations of these findings are also indicated in order to establish the usefulness of these findings as the basis for the design of a parental involvement programme.

7.2 Limitations of this study

The findings, based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative results, had a high degree of reliability and validity (see 4.2.7, 4.3.10 & 4.3.11), thus, they provide a suitable basis for the design of a parental involvement programme. However, while the parental involvement findings are generalisable to Swazi urban senior primary school education, they are not generalisable to education at all schools and at all levels.

The generalisability of these results is particularly limited where rural schools are concerned. Rural schools in Swaziland, like those in South Africa (Maree & Molepo 1999:375), have fewer resources and operate under more difficult conditions than urban schools. Rural schools usually have larger class sizes, fewer facilities, higher proportions of children who do not live with their parents, higher proportions of illiterate parents and, unsurprisingly, poorer academic results (IE 1994:1-29). Thus, investigation of parental involvement in the rural Swazi population may yield quite different findings as was found by Heystek & Louw (1999:21) when they compared rural and urban South African schools. Further, research has shown that parents tend to be involved less and have different barriers to their involvement as their children get older (see 2.8), thus, caution must be exercised when generalising these results to junior primary or secondary education.

A further limitation of this study was that each hypothesis was not tested separately for each of Epstein's (1995:704) six types of parental involvement. Some studies that did not find differences in the extents various groups of parents were generally involved in their children's education, did find differences in the ways they were involved when involvement in these areas was measured separately (e.g. Hickman *et al*/ 1995:129). It is possible that while no significant differences in SIPI, PIPi and PAS were found for parents of different SES, education levels, languages, marital statuses and so forth, these parents may,

nevertheless, be involved to different degrees in some of Epstein's six types of involvement.

In conclusion, the findings of this study serve as a suitable basis for an urban senior primary parental involvement programme. However, further research is required in order to establish the involvement of parents with different family background factors in each of Epstein's six types of activities and to investigate parental involvement in rural areas and at other levels of education. Research will also be required to improve, and determine the effectiveness of, the parental involvement programme recommended in the following section.

7.3 A programme for parental involvement in urban senior primary education in Swaziland

7.3.1 Introduction

Urban primary school teachers and parents in Swaziland have unique understandings of, and feelings and beliefs about, parental involvement (see 6.4). Furthermore, unique barriers and facilitators to parental involvement exist in this community (see 6.4). Consequently, the parental involvement programme recommended in the following sections is based largely upon the findings of this study. Nevertheless, advice is also drawn from the literature. Downer (1996:44) states, "While there is no one "perfect" parental involvement program, there are elements common to all programs which can furnish a useful starting point for developing stronger links between home and school".

In practice successful parental involvement requires considerable time and sensitive work. Epstein (1991:348) found that three to fifteen years of concerted effort, during which programmes were honed to suit specific schools and districts, was required to see real progress in partnerships. Thus, the

recommendations that follow are intended to serve as starting points to increasing parental involvement in Swazi urban primary schools rather than final pronouncements on what must be done. As the programme unfolds it will necessarily require modification. Further, no two schools will have exactly the same programme since it will have to be adapted to suit the unique needs of each school's learners and families (Allen Brough & Irvin 2001:56). As a result most recommendations are in the form of broad guidelines.

A great number of different parent involvement practices have been studied and are recommended (see 2.4). It is not within the scope of this thesis to review each of these. However, specific recommendations of established strategies that may serve as useful guidelines to teachers and schools in the design of their own parental involvement programme are made.

In the following sections recommendations and implications for the major role players in parental involvement shall be given, followed by recommendations for improving involvement in each of Epstein's six types of parental involvement. Since the lack of a culture of parental involvement in this community can be traced back to the national education policy (see 6.4), this shall serve as the starting point for these recommendations.

7.3.2 Government

The Swazi government prioritises education and allocates a great deal of resources to education (see 3.2). This has resulted in an impressive improvement in the quality and accessibility of education in Swaziland over recent decades (IE 1994:1). However, efforts to improve education have not focussed on parental involvement (see 3.3.2.2). The limited role assigned to parents in their children's education by education policy, suggests that policy makers and Education Ministry officials are not fully aware of the benefits and cost effectiveness of

parental involvement. Numerous research studies have shown parental involvement to be one of the most inexpensive and effective ways to improve the quality of education (Epstein 1991:349; van der Werf *et al*/2001:447).

Education policy has a large impact on the practice of parental involvement at schools (Epstein 1987b:5). Epstein (1987b:7) notes that the first step towards a viable parent involvement programme is the **design of specific policy for parental involvement**. Consequently, the design of a policy **that clearly specifies the government's perspectives, services, requirements and expectations concerning parental involvement** is recommended. **Explicit guidelines for the implementation** of policy, similar to those in South African education policy on parental involvement in government and advocacy (see 3.3.3), must be included (see 3.3.4). In order to derive maximum benefits it is recommended that **policy makers adopt Swap's Partnership Model** of parental involvement (see 2.7.4.4). However, a culture of parental involvement has not been established in Swaziland (see 6.4). As a result it may be unrealistic to expect teachers and parents to make the transition from Swap's Protective Model, which is practiced at most schools, to the Partnership Model. Swazi teachers were open to Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model (see 6.4). Thus, **policy that adopts Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model as a stepping stone towards partnership** may be more successfully implemented. Swap (1993:37) notes, "If the experiences of school personnel are positive over time and good relationships are developed through sustained contact, school personnel's control over programs may give way to a more comfortable and mutual exchange of ideas and joint planning".

Further, it is recommended that **policy be comprehensive and include all six of Epstein's types of involvement**. Comprehensive programmes are most beneficial (see 2.4.1). Further, a comprehensive programme would provide opportunities for all Swazi parents to be involved in their children's education. Not all parents will be able to volunteer at the school, due to work commitments

(see 6.2.4.5), and only small numbers of parents serve on decision-making committees (see 3.3.3.2). Thus, types of involvement such as involvement in **learning activities in the home and parenting**, in which most parents can play a role must also be included. Moreover, these two types of involvement are particularly effective in improving academic outcomes (see 2.4.8). Hence, it is recommended that they **are emphasised** in the parental involvement programme.

It is recommended that this comprehensive policy include, at the very least, an **advisory role in decision-making for parents with a view towards future partnership** (see 2.4.6). This requires that the **Ministry of Education devolve many of its decision-making powers to the individual schools** (see 6.2.6). Policy should require head-teachers, teachers and parents to make decisions together on curriculum, teaching methods, staffing requirements, discipline and so forth. Further, **education policy should obligate private schools to accord parents some role in decision-making**.

For successful implementation, policy must be **effectively communicated to schools and backed by adequate resources** (see 3.3.4). Epstein (1991:348) recommends that school districts employ a **parent involvement facilitator whose job is specifically to promote parental involvement** by guiding school staff, providing in-service training for teachers, offering services to parents and so forth. Epstein (in Jones 2001:22), notes that this is a "thrifty investment" because each facilitator can be shared between up to 30 schools.

Competitive grants should be awarded to schools to fund parental involvement programmes. These grants have been used successfully in other countries (see 2.7.5). Chapman (1991:358) advises that **multi rather than single year grants** are awarded as it often takes longer than a year to involve parents effectively. Parental involvement cannot succeed without adequate financial resources (Epstein 1987b:4).

It is advised **that a budget be allocated to recognise the successes of teachers** in this area. Since Swazi teachers work hard and have little time or energy for the demanding task of involving parents (see 6.3.3.6), teachers need to be given incentives to motivate them to involve parents and teach parents how to be involved. While many alternatives exist, financial bonuses or awards from the Ministry of Education based on the recommendations of head-teachers and the parent involvement facilitators may serve to help motivate teachers.

Nevertheless, all the teachers interviewed were extremely dedicated and their lack of knowledge of parental involvement was primarily responsible for their low efforts to involve parents (see 6.3.3.8). As a result the greatest motivation for them to help establish and implement parental involvement would be a proper understanding of it, its techniques and benefits. Thus, it is recommended that **teacher certification require the completion of a course in parental involvement and that teachers receive in-service training in parental involvement**. These courses should have both an applied and a theoretical component (Comer 1987:14).

7.3.3 Teachers

Swazi teachers need to be taught what parental involvement is. They must be made familiar with different parental involvement activities and the benefits thereof (see 6.3.3.2). **These teachers must be taught that it is part of their role to involve parents and that parental involvement is primarily their responsibility** (see 6.3.3.3. & 6.3.3.4). The skills required to involve parents effectively must be communicated to Swazi teachers and they must be taught that it is possible to involve all parents productively including single (see 6.3.5.9) and uneducated parents (see 6.3.5.2). Thus, **a comprehensive pre-service or in-service parental involvement course that provides teachers with the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence**

they require to involve all parents successfully is recommended for all teachers.

Shartrand *et al* (in van Wyk 2001:128) have developed such a framework of attitudes, skills and knowledge that educators need to work effectively with families and the community. Further, they have described four different approaches to parental involvement that can be adopted by the teacher training institution. The approach adopted affects how these seven common areas of content are presented to the teacher (Shartrand *et al* in van Wyk 2001:131). **This flexible but comprehensive programme may serve as a good basis for an initial pre-service or in-service course on parental involvement for Swazi teachers.**

The vast majority of parents and teachers came from the same sociocultural background (see 6.4). As a result, teachers understood parents' barriers to involvement as they faced many of the same barriers and had similar values to, and very good relationships with, parents (see 6.3.5.8 & 6.3.5.15). Thus the majority of the parents were not isolated from the school culture. Consequently, a Swazi parent involvement course may not need to place as much emphasis on teacher understanding and respect of the values and cultures of other racial-ethnic groups as courses in other communities where sociocultural differences form a major barrier to involvement (see 2.7.2.1 & 2.7.2.2). Nevertheless, the urban parent community is not completely homogenous (see Table 4.2) and some racial-ethnic or language groups, such as Portuguese-speaking parents, may be distanced from the school (see 6.3.5.6). Consequently, it is recommended that **respect for and understanding of cultural differences, as well as ways to help these parents become more involved are addressed as part of the course.** Teachers must be open to and accepting of all types of parents. It is essential that schools and teachers realise that involving different families requires different strategies and that a "one style fits all" approach tends to result in some families not becoming involved (Edwards &

Jones-Young 1992:76). Consequently, **teachers must be taught to implement a variety of strategies and techniques** to encourage parental involvement (Tichenor 1998:256).

In-service programmes should specifically target head-teachers who communicate their vision of parental involvement to the teachers (see 6.3.4.2c). Downer (1996:45) notes that, "The future of parental involvement in education rests significantly on the energy, vision and will of the school principal".

After the initial course on parental involvement, more advanced annual or bi-**annual courses to motivate and update teachers and head-teachers** are recommended.

Swazi teachers and head-teachers work very hard at school (see 6.3.3.6), and have many commitments outside work hours (see 6.3.5.8). Consequently, it is recommended that **courses are accompanied by lunch, and that teachers' bus fares are paid**. This is likely to prevent teachers from feeling resentful about the additional demands placed on their time by course attendance.

7.3.4 Parents

Gettinger and Guetschow (1998:40) state, "Parents who hold positive efficacy beliefs assume that their involvement will be beneficial for children and are likely to participate actively in school activities even when faced with difficulties." Steps must be taken to ensure that **all Swazi parents, and particularly older parents and fathers** (see 6.3.5.12), **realise that their involvement will benefit their children**. All parents, **regardless of whether they pay high school fees** or not (see 6.3.4.2), must recognise that their role in their children's education is **essential and irreplaceable**. **Workshops, that explain the nature and benefits of parental involvement are**

recommended. These could be directed by the parent involvement facilitator, parent-involvement committee (see 7.3.5), and teachers. However, parents must not simply be told that they should be involved. Not all Swazi parents were confident or knew how to help their children (see 6.2.5.4 & 6.3.5.3). Workshops must also provide parents with the **specific skills** that they need to feel confident and be involved effectively (see 6.3.5.3). Parents also need to be **warned about involvement practices that may be detrimental to their children** (see 2.9.2). Jantjes (1995:300) advises that parents be reminded of their responsibilities once or twice a year.

Further, Epstein (1988:58) emphasises the importance of schools showing parents that their involvement is permitted and encouraged. Thus, it is recommended that the **head-teacher and teachers also make continual informal efforts** to invite parents to be involved, provide them with skills, and show approval of their attempts to be involved. Although most schools had an **open-door policy** and parents felt welcome (see 6.2.3), it is recommended that each school literally make room for parents by **establishing a "parent room" at the school** where parents can discuss ideas and obtain information and resources (Epstein 1991:349). All parents should feel that the school is a good place for them as well as their children (see 5.6.1).

7.3.5 Schools

Each school should have its own policy on parental involvement, as is the case in many other countries (Cullingford & Morrison 1999:253). This **policy should be created by the combined efforts of the head-teacher, teachers and all parents** working together (Edwards & Warin 1999:337). Epstein (1995:708) recommends that **each school create an action team**, which includes at least three teachers and three parents of children at different

grade levels, whose task it is to draw up and guide the implementation of this policy.

It is essential that this **committee be truly representative** of the teachers and all parents. This is necessary for the teachers' sense of ownership of this policy without which they are less likely to become involved (Lawson 2003:113). Further, according to Rasinski (in Parr *et al* 1993:36) the key to any successful parent-school collaboration is giving parents a **meaningful role in the planning of this collaboration. Consequently, the entire parent body must have the opportunity to comment on and modify policy before it is finalised.** Parent meetings, newsletters, and surveys can be used for this purpose. Existing surveys, such as that of Brown (2000:10), can be used as the basis for designing surveys to suit the specific school.

The school policy should **clearly outline the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents and teachers and be effectively and regularly communicated to all involved.** As a result both teachers and parents must know that parents are expected to be involved and in precisely what ways. Comer (1987:15) recommends that this policy include a **"no fault" philosophy**, such that emphasis is placed on problem solving rather than assigning blame to either teachers or parents when problems do occur.

Like education policy, for successful implementation, school policy must include **clear and explicit guidelines for the practice of each of Epstein's six types of involvement.** Epstein (1995:709) recommends that initially the **parent involvement committee develop a three-year outline of goals** for each of the six types of involvement that will help the school progress from its starting point to where it wants to be in three years. In addition, a **detailed one-year plan** should be developed for the first year's work. It should include the **specific activities** that will be implemented, improved, or maintained, and a **time line of monthly actions** needed for each activity. Further the one-year

plan must **clearly identify the specific people who are responsible** for and who will assist with the implementation of each activity and must include how the **implementation or results of each activity will be assessed** (Epstein 1995:709).

Policy should be revised on an ongoing basis to improve parent involvement and include the beliefs and circumstances of new learners, parents and teachers. It is recommended that the parent involvement committee schedule a **meeting for the entire parent body at least twice a year** to present its goals and progress and receive feedback from the parent body (Epstein 1995:709).

7.3.6 Recommendations for each of Epstein's six types of parental involvement

Since a comprehensive programme is recommended, ways to increase each of Epstein's six types of parental involvement follow. Vast multitudes of different parental involvement activities exist (Epstein 1995:707). Since resources are limited and teachers have little experience of parental involvement in Swaziland, **inexpensive and easily implemented** activities are recommended for this programme.

7.3.6.1 Parenting

Parenting has been found to have a very strong relationship with school achievement, and to have a greater effect on academic success than SES variables (see 2.4.2). Thus, it is recommended that the Swazi parental involvement programme **emphasise parenting**.

Swazi parents, like parents everywhere, care about their children and want them to be well educated (see 6.3.4.2d). Although Swazi parents met their children's material needs (see 6.2.2.3), some parents became so annoyed and frustrated

when trying to help their children that they abandoned these attempts (see 6.3.5.5). Further, parents did not always employ ideal parenting styles (see 6.2.2.1 & 6.3.4.2d) and, teachers complained, and parents admitted, that parents did not always supervise their children adequately (6.2.2.3). Consequently, it is recommended that **schools hold workshops that focus on parenting skills and home supervision. Fathers** in particular, many of whom may not have learned positive skills from their own fathers (Frieman & Berkeley 2002:209), may need information about positive fathering (see 6.3.5.12).

It is recommended that **Jantjes's questionnaire** (Jantjes 1995:304), **serve as the basis of such a parenting workshop.** This questionnaire describes specific, manageable, inexpensive activities aimed at producing positive changes in the home environment and was used successfully to benefit learners, their teachers and parents, in an impoverished South African community (Jantjes 1995:289-304). Further, this questionnaire served as the basis of the well received parental involvement workshop used in this study (see 4.3.5.3 & 6.3.4.2d). Teachers must guard against using these workshops as opportunities to teach parents the values of the school (Edwards & Warin 1999: 337).

In addition, a number of specific recommendations are made, particularly, with regard to home supervision (see 6.2.2.3). Parents should **monitor** what their children are watching and **restrict** the number of hours their children spend **watching TV** (see 6.2.2.2). **Time-tables** that clearly demarcate time for school-work, chores, TV and homework should be drawn-up by parents and children to ensure an appropriate balance between these activities and to ensure that school-work is not left to a time when the child is exhausted (see 6.2.2.3). Parents should also arrange a **quiet place** for their children to study (Christenson *et al*/1992b:185).

7.3.6.2 *Communication*

Good two-way communication is the fundamental criterion for any successful parental involvement programme (Dimmock *et al* 1996:16). **Parents must understand** that it is not enough for them to respond to written communication from the school but **that personal communication with the teacher is essential** (see 6.2.3.4). **Parents and teachers need to realise that all parents have an abundance of knowledge about their children's skills, interests and backgrounds** that should be communicated to teachers (see 6.2.3.3). **The school must create opportunities for parents to communicate** this information. It is recommended that teachers and schools **provide many formal and informal occasions**, in addition to their open-door policy (see 6.2.3.4), for teachers to meet with and talk to parents. Each school should invite parents at all grade levels to attend an **orientation meeting** within the first month of the first term where teachers have the opportunity to meet with and talk to parents and the subject of parental involvement can be broached. Thereafter, teachers and parents should communicate personally at **teacher-parent meetings, PTA meetings, sports, cultural and social events, workshops** and so forth. On these occasions **teachers should make a deliberate effort** to talk to all parents. Schools should **maintain their reports and frequent effective written notes** to parents (see 6.2.3.4), however in addition, it is recommended that each child carry a **communication book** which is used by parents and teachers to communicate with each other.

Most schools in Swaziland have only one phone line and teachers are only available at break, thus it is difficult for teachers to communicate telephonically with parents from the school (see 5.7.3). However, the satisfaction of the few parents who did communicate with teachers telephonically (see 6.2.3.4) suggests that **teachers should make their home telephone numbers available to parents** and encourage parents to phone them at mutually agreed upon times.

In addition, Stouffer (1992:6) recommends that schools issue **regular newsletters** and that both **parents and teachers monitor daily or weekly check-sheets for learner progress**. These are inexpensive but effective methods of communication. Although teachers' time constraints and the fact that some parents live far away from the school probably make **home visits** to most parents impractical, these **are recommended for parents who are particularly hard to reach** in other ways.

Schools should certainly continue to **contact the parents in the case of a drop in the academic performance of a child or the development of behaviour problems** (see 6.2.3.3a). However, true partnership between teacher and parent requires that the teacher ensure that the **parent is thoroughly informed about every aspect of his child's education** (Chapman 1991:358). It is recommended that teachers ensure that every parent knows how his child **behaves in the classroom, the child's relationship with peers at school, which topics are being studied, and about all events occurring at the school**. This information gives the parents the knowledge and confidence they require to help their children, and make suggestions and contributions to the school (Epstein 1986:288). **Teachers must know that communication with all parents, not just those whose children have problems, is essential** (see 6.2.3.3a & 6.3.3.5). Stouffer (1992:6) recommends that **emphasis be placed on relaying positive news** to the parent. Further, to successfully involve parents, **all communications should be polite, respectful, warm, and friendly** such that the parent feels valued and welcome at the school. For example, parents should not view parent-teacher meetings as functions where they must account for the failures of their children (Johnson & Ramson 1980:121).

Swazi urban primary schools communicate to parents in either siSwati or English (see 3.2). Although most parents are comfortable communicating in these languages, a small proportion, particularly those that are Portuguese-speaking,

may experience a communication barrier (see 6.3.5.6). In order to involve these parents in their children's education it is recommended that where possible, **teachers who are able to communicate in the other languages be asked to translate school notes.** Further, all **teachers must make a special effort to invite and encourage these parents to attend meetings with a friend, relative, or even their own child, who can serve as a translator.**

Finally, it is recommended that because sometimes only one parent in the couple is highly involved (see 6.3.5.11), **teachers must ensure that they maintain contact with both the mother and the father** whether or not the parents are married. **If the child is living with someone other than the parents,** which is sometimes the case in urban Swaziland (see 6.3.5.10), then **both the parents and this other person must receive all communications from the school and be invited to communicate with teachers.**

7.3.6.3 Involvement at the school

Swazi urban parents are formally invited to the school too infrequently (see 6.2.4). **It is recommended that parents be invited far more often to formal events at times and dates that suit them.** Head-teachers do not seem to know what these times are (see 6.3.5.14). Thus, each school should carry out a **survey to determine the most suitable days and dates for school meetings.** Whenever possible **meetings and events should not be held during work hours, on weekend mornings when funerals are held, or on days where parents are known to have commitments to their local Chief** (see 6.3.5.7 & 6.3.5.8). The school could also arrange a **baby-sitter** as Stouffer (1992:6) suggests. This may encourage **non-Swazi parents** who may not have extended family available to look after their children to attend meetings (see 6.3.5.8). It is not necessary for the schools to arrange transport for parents (see 6.3.5.13).

It is recommended that **parent-teacher meetings are held at least once a school term** (see 6.2.4.1). **Class teachers should keep a register** noting whether and which family member attends these meetings. If the **primary caretaker of the child has not attended, this person should be contacted and an alternative date arranged**. The school must ensure that the **importance of parental attendance at these meetings is explained prior to these meetings** so that all parents are fully aware of the necessity of attending these meetings (see 6.2.4.1). The flexibility shown at School D where parents could arrange alternative dates may have been partly responsible for the high parent attendance of these meetings that these teachers claimed (see 6.2.4.1). Consequently, it is recommended that **parents are given a choice of a few times and days to attend parent-teacher meetings**. It is advised that **schools adopt Swap's guidelines** for productive and well-attended parent-teacher meetings (Swap 1992:70-71).

As Swazi schools are under funded (see 3.2) it is recommended that **schools hold frequent fundraisers**. Parents' willingness to raise funds (see 6.2.4.2) should be harnessed by **encouraging parents to be the major role players in fundraising**. In order that parents feel a sense of ownership for the fundraising effort, **parents should decide on how funds are spent and organise and manage fundraisers**. The election of parents to an **annual fundraising committee** is recommended. The majority of the members of this committee should be parents although a few staff members would be needed to represent the school.

Teachers, head-teachers, and parents need to be made aware of the importance of sports, social and cultural events to the development of the whole child. They must know that parents' attendance at these events not only motivates children but may also improve their grades and provides excellent informal opportunities for parents and teachers to get to know each other, share information, and build positive

relationships (see 2.4.4). These events which Swazi parents are particularly enthusiastic about, must be **held far more frequently** (see 6.2.4.3). Comer (in Jones 2001:21) says that his proven recipe for bringing parents into schools is to feed them and put their kids on the stage. It is recommended that **at least one of each of these sporting, cultural or social events be held each term, that refreshments are provided, and that parents are asked to help plan, organise and manage these events.** Further, schools should use these events as opportunities to hand out information, offer tours of the school buildings, and begin discussions about learners' work (Jones 2001:21).

Schools must invite parents to play a role in educational trips. Parents were willing to be involved and their contributions improved these trips (6.2.4.4.). **It is recommended that venues be decided upon through parent-teacher consultation and that parents be asked to help organise, and supervise these trips.**

Although most teachers were enthusiastic about parents volunteering in the classroom, **all teachers must be persuaded that all parents can contribute positively by volunteering at the school and not just those who are educated or have some training in education** (see 6.2.4.5). All parents should be invited to volunteer in the classroom at **all grade levels** and not just the lower grades. Teachers also need to be made aware of the many other ways that parents can volunteer at the school. It is recommended that **parents are invited to help volunteer at the tuck-shop, in the classroom, on the sports field, in the library, in the school administration, and to give talks to the learners.** McKenna and Willms (1998:34) note that to give all parents an opportunity to volunteer, **schools may need to provide training in some areas.**

Teachers and parents have similar commitments (see 6.3.5.8) and teachers understand that intensive involvement at the school is not possible for many

parents mainly due to work commitments (see 6.2.4.5). Nevertheless, **teachers should be persistent in their efforts to involve parents at the school** even if only for an hour or two. For the same reasons it may be unrealistic to expect both parents to attend all meetings and events at the school. However, if **teachers** note that the same parent attends all events (see 6.3.5.11) it is recommended that they **personally invite and encourage the other parent to attend as well. Parents should know that it is preferable for both parents to attend events and meetings** (see 6.3.5.11).

7.3.6.4 Learning activities in the home

Since it is easier for all parents to be involved in **home learning activities** and since these activities are particularly effective in improving children's grades (see 2.4.5), it is recommended that these activities **be emphasised**.

Teachers and parents need to be aware that home discussion has been shown to have a particularly strong relationship with learner academic achievement (see 2.4.8). It is recommended that **teachers explain the importance of home discussion to parents and encourage parents to talk to their children** about their friends, experiences at school, and their future goals, and offer them verbal encouragement and guidance. Teachers should inform parents of **specific strategies** that they can use to create opportunities for home discussion, for example, meal-times together with the TV off.

Swazi teachers value parents' help in ensuring that homework is done and many parents supervise homework (see 6.2.5.4). To encourage all parents to supervise their children's homework, it is recommended that all **schools have a policy that requires parents to sign the completed homework**. If this is not done, teachers should contact parents and personally request that they sign homework and explain the importance of doing this.

Most Swazi parents help with homework whether teachers want them to or not, but many parents do not know how to help (see 6.2.5.4 & 6.3.5.3). **Teachers need to know that all parents, even those that are less educated, can help with homework productively but that they need to be taught, by the teachers how to help** (see 6.2.5.4 & 6.3.5.2). McKenna and Willms (1998:34) state that the most important criterion for the success of home learning programmes is that parents receive adequate instruction in their role. **Parents must be taught strategies that are developmentally appropriate for the child. Skills workshops for parents** are recommended. Nevertheless, **parents should not be used as extensions of the teacher and taught to act in “teacherly” ways**. This has been found to have a negative effect on parents’ motivation to be involved in home learning activities (Edwards & Warin 1999:330-333). Teachers, while **providing clear guidelines for every homework assignment**, should enthusiastically embrace parents’ correct but different ways of helping their children with homework.

In addition to daily routine homework assignments that are mainly intended for learners to practice skills learned at school, **teachers must become aware that homework can be used as a tool for parental involvement** (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:182). It is recommended that with the help of the parent-involvement facilitator, **teachers design home learning activities that are specifically intended to be done by parents and children together and that maximise the unique positive qualities of the parent-child relationship**. These activities must be purposeful, engaging, manageable, and of high quality in order to appropriately and effectively involve parents, motivate both parent and child, and be of benefit to the child (Kliman 1999:140; Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:186). Epstein and van Voorhis (2001:186) recommend that this type of homework be given **once a week or once every two weeks** in order to accommodate family schedules. **Teachers may wish to base their designs on the “Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS)”** interactive homework process designed by Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001:186).

TIPS has been designed to extend time for learners to practice skills and learn actively, increase teacher-parent communications about the curriculum, and improve parent-child connections on learning activities at home (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:189-190). TIPS has been shown to improve learner's grades in some subject areas and help parents of senior primary school children know what their children have learned in class (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:187-189). **TIPS manuals and prototype materials are available** (Epstein & Van Voorhis 2001:189) **and it is recommended that teachers consider using these as the basis for their design of interactive homework.** Alternatively, teachers can design and send home **inexpensive subject specific packages of manipulatives and activities** for parents and children to work on together. These can be based on one or more of the numerous home-packages that have been used successfully in foreign schools (see Gennaro & Lawrenz 1992:985-994; Carey 1998:314-319; Ehnebuske 1998:338-351; Gervasoni 1998:12-14).

Swazi parents and teachers must also be made aware of the advantages to the child of parents playing educational games with them, reading with them, helping them prepare for tests, and reading their compositions (see 5.7.3 & 6.2.5.3). Caldwell (1998:367) recommends including educational games in school libraries and holding "family board game nights". It is advised that **parents be given a monthly schedule of assignments and tests.** The practice used by Ms. Dube to **involve parents in their children's composition writing** is recommended (see 6.2.5.3).

7.3.6.5 Decision-making

Involvement in decision-making enables parents to feel a sense of ownership of the school and ensures a better fit between the needs of the children and school policy (see 2.4.6). Consequently, it is recommended **that parents of Swazi urban primary school children be given an advisory role in all decisions concerning their children's education.** This includes decisions on curriculum, teaching methods, amount and types of homework, how school funds are spent,

discipline, school uniform, school time-table, and the appointment of school staff. **A full partnership is not recommended initially** due to the reluctance of the parents interviewed, who were highly involved in other ways, to contribute to these decisions (see 6.2.6). It seems possible that, as found in other countries (see 2.4.6), many Swazi parents do not want much role in decision-making. Playing an advisory role in decisions may help parents see themselves as decision-makers and **make the transition to partnership** possible. Further, teachers who also have no experience of parents as decision-makers, are not likely to resist this advisory role for parents as most teachers were enthusiastic about parents contributing to most decisions (see 6.2.6.8).

Consequently, it is recommended **that education policy be amended to ensure that school boards are no longer allowed to make decisions in isolation** (see 7.3.2). Teachers and the school PTA, or some other **truly representative parent body must be invited to attend and contribute to any school board meetings where decisions are made**. Before decisions are made, PTA general meetings should include a presentation of various alternatives to the parent body. The parents should be given an opportunity to air their views publicly at these meetings and express their opinions through votes or surveys. **The opinions of the majority of parents should then be adopted unless these are contrary to the professional judgement of the majority of teachers**. Clearly, parents will not continue to express their beliefs if these are frequently ignored. When decisions are finalised, the **rationale for them should always be explained to the parent body**. It is recommended that over time parents who are representative of the school parent body should come to constitute the majority of the school governing body.

7.3.6.6 *Community collaboration*

The schools studied operated in virtual isolation from their wider communities (see 6.2.7). Interaction only took place between schools and their parent community or religious community (see 6.2.7). **It is recommended that partnerships be established between the community and the school that will benefit both parties.**

It is advised, even though children of families living within the immediate vicinity of the school often attend other schools (see 3.2), that **schools become the centre of community life** as stated in South African policy (see 3.3.3.1). Community centres are in short supply in urban Swaziland and it is recommended that **school facilities be made available to the community** for community social, fundraising and educational events. Further, **school children can contribute to their communities** by visiting hospitalised children and the aged, collecting litter, providing choral and musical programmes for the community and so forth. As a result of such activities local businesses are likely to be far more enthusiastic about making donations, and sponsoring events, at schools.

Schools should draw up a register of local agencies and organisations.

It is recommended that, as was done by a South African school (Lemmer 2000:71), **each grade be allocated a "buddy organisation"** with whom they would work for a year. Further, local businesses could also be approached to **donate their outdated computer equipment to schools and any other materials** that they no longer require that may have educational value. Peressini (1998:324) suggests that restaurants and shops be approached to donate menus and grocery flyers that may be useful in maths classes. **Volunteer tutors** in various subjects could also be sought from the local community and the school could ask **experts in the community to help train school staff in financial and computer skills**. There are many **religious groups, businesses, and non-government organisations** in urban areas. It

is recommended that like School D (see 6.2.7), all schools frequently invite members of these organisations to **make presentations** to the learners on subjects such as life-skills and career opportunities.

7.4 Summary of recommendations for a Swazi urban primary school parental involvement programme

For the convenience of policy makers and educators, a summary of the recommendations and implications of these recommendations for the major role players in parental involvement is tabulated (see Table 7.1). This is followed by Table 7.2, which presents a brief overview of the recommendations for each of Epstein's six types of parental involvement.

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Table 7.1 Recommendations for the major role players in parental involvement

<p>Government</p> <p>Specific policy for parental involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government's perspectives, services requirements and expectations • Explicit guidelines for implementation • Temporary adoption of Swap's School-to-Home Transmission Model • Transition to Swap's Partnership Model • Comprehensive, including all six of Epstein's types of PI • Emphasises parenting and learning activities in the home • Initially, an advisory role for parents in decision-making, later partnership • Delegation of decision-making powers from Ministry of Education to schools • Effective communication of policy <p>Provision of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent involvement facilitator • Competitive multi-year grants • Bonuses or awards to recognise teachers' successes <p>Teacher training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental involvement course required for certification • In-service training for PI 	
<p>Teachers</p> <p>In-service and pre-service training in parental involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course based on the framework of Shartrand <i>et al</i> 1997 • Teachers' role is to involve parents • Understanding of PI and benefits • Knowledge, skills and confidence for PI • Uneducated and single parents can be involved productively • Respect for, and understanding of, cultural differences • Variety of strategies and techniques • Head-teachers specifically targeted • Annual courses to motivate and update teachers • Courses include lunch and bus fair 	<p>Schools</p> <p>School policy on parental involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created by parents, teachers and head-teacher • Action team representative of parents and teachers • Clearly specifies responsibilities, rights and duties of parents and teachers • All six types of PI • Effectively and regularly communicated • Clear and explicit guidelines for implementation • Three year outline of goals • Detailed one year plan • Time line of monthly actions for each activity • Specifies people responsible • Assessment of progress and results • Revised on an ongoing basis • "No fault" philosophy • Presentation of goals and progress to, and feedback from, parent body twice a year.
<p>Parents</p> <p>Workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parents, particularly older parents and fathers, must know they are essential and irreplaceable in education • Parents must know benefits of PI • Provide parents with specific skills for PI • Warned of detrimental involvement practices • Workshops held once or twice a year <p>Open-door policy and establishment of parent room</p>	

Table 7.2 Recommendations for each of Epstein's six types of parental involvement

<u>Parenting</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Involvement at the school</u>	<u>Learning activities in the home</u>	<u>Decision-making</u>	<u>Community collaboration</u>
<p>Must be emphasised.</p> <p>Workshops on parenting skills and home supervision based on Jantjes 1995 questionnaire.</p> <p>Positive fathering skills.</p> <p>Parents must supervise and restrict amount of TV watched.</p> <p>Time-table of home activities.</p> <p>A quiet place for study.</p>	<p>Personal two-way communication is essential.</p> <p>Teachers must realise parents have abundance of knowledge on child's skills, interests and backgrounds.</p> <p>School must create many formal and informal opportunities for communication including, orientation, PTA and teacher-parent meetings and sports, cultural and social events.</p> <p>Reports, written notes, and communication books.</p> <p>Teachers' home numbers made available to parents.</p> <p>Regular newsletters.</p> <p>Check-sheets for learner progress.</p> <p>Home visits to hard-to-reach parents.</p> <p>Child's behaviour, relationship with peers, topics and events communicated.</p> <p>Emphasis on positive communication.</p> <p>Polite, respectful warm and friendly communication.</p> <p>Notes translated for non-English speakers.</p> <p>Contact maintained with mother, father and other care-givers.</p>	<p>Frequent formal invitations to school.</p> <p>Survey to determine suitable dates and times.</p> <p>Baby-sitters provided.</p> <p>Parent-teacher meetings once per term. Flexible times and dates. Register of parent attendance kept. Swap's 1992 guidelines adopted.</p> <p>Frequent fundraisers organised and managed by parents. Fundraising committee elected.</p> <p>One sports, cultural and social event per term. Parents and teachers must be informed of the benefits of events and parent attendance. Parents help, plan, organise and manage.</p> <p>Parents invited to organise and supervise educational trips.</p> <p>All parents invited to volunteer at school at all grade levels and school venues. Schools provide training.</p> <p>Both parents encouraged to attend events.</p>	<p>Must be emphasised.</p> <p>Teachers emphasise home discussion and provide strategies.</p> <p>School policy requires parents to sign homework.</p> <p>Teachers must be informed that all parents can help and must teach parents effective, developmentally appropriate strategies and skills at workshops. Parents must not be regarded as extensions of teachers.</p> <p>Homework as a tool for parental involvement. Teachers design interactive homework based on TIPS and/or give subject specific packages of manipulatives once a week or every fortnight.</p> <p>Parents encouraged to play educational games, carry out reading activities, play a role in written compositions, and help prepare for tests and assignments.</p> <p>Parents given monthly test and assignment schedule.</p>	<p>Initially parents given an advisory role, as a step towards partnership in all decisions, including, decisions on curriculum, teaching methods, staff appointment, discipline, uniform, timetable, spending of school funds and homework.</p> <p>School boards not permitted to make decisions in isolation.</p> <p>Representative parent committee contributes to decisions.</p> <p>Presentation of alternatives to parent body and parents given opportunity to express opinions publicly and by voting or through surveys.</p> <p>Opinions of majority of parents adopted unless contradictory to professional judgement of teachers.</p> <p>In time parents must constitute majority of decision-making body.</p>	<p>Establishment of partnerships between community and schools.</p> <p>Schools as community centres.</p> <p>Services by learners to the community including, litter drives, choral and musical programmes, visits to the sick and aged.</p> <p>Schools draw up register of local agencies and organisations.</p> <p>Each grade allocated a "buddy organisation".</p> <p>Businesses approached for outdated equipment and materials.</p> <p>Volunteer tutors and staff trainers sought from community.</p> <p>Frequent presentations to learners by community groups and organisations.</p>

7.5 Concluding remarks

Without a structured parental involvement programme it is likely that Swazi urban senior primary school parents would continue to be only minimally involved in their children's education. Thus, recommendations for a parent involvement programme suited to this community have been given. These recommendations are tabulated for ease of application by policy makers and educators (see Tables 7.1 & 7.2). The implementation of this programme should enable teachers and parents to recognise the importance of parental involvement and assist them to become confident and comfortable to carry out their roles in this respect. This should result in many benefits to learners, teachers and parents and help overcome the limited opportunities and weaknesses in the schooling of some learners.

However, a final cautionary note is needed. Research has shown that the development of partnerships is a process that requires a great deal of time and effort. Instant involvement of all parents in all activities cannot be expected and not all learners will instantly improve their attitudes or achievements. Further, successful partnerships are difficult to establish even when resources are available, and teachers and parents committed (Cullingford & Morrison 1999:261). Thus, a considerable amount of time and effort are likely to be required to create partnerships between Swazi parents and teachers. Nevertheless, if this comprehensive, parental involvement programme is implemented this should result in more and more parents and teachers learning to work together on behalf of the children whose interests they share, to the benefit of learners, parents and teachers.

Epstein (1991:349) notes, "Shared vision and concerted effort have led to a variety of successful programs to connect schools, families and communities. There is no excuse for not taking the first sure steps down one of the many paths to partnership".

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Appendix 1: Introductory letter to the head-teacher

L. Monadjem
(Researcher's address
and telephone
number)

To the Head-teacher

Re: Permission to carry out a parental involvement study at your school.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently registered at UNISA to do a DEd in Psychology of Education. The main aim of my research is to involve parents of Swazi senior primary school children in the education of their children to the benefit of the pupils, their parents and teachers.

Five schools in the Mbabane/Manzini region have been selected for this study of which yours is one. I would like to request permission to carry out the study at your school.

The first part of my study requires the parents of your Grade 5 pupils to answer a questionnaire. The questionnaires will be handed out to the pupils in class, this will only take a few minutes, and pupils will be requested to take their parents questionnaires home with them. Secondly teachers will be briefly interviewed at a time convenient to them. Thus, the study should not be disruptive to the school routine. Furthermore, the study is completely anonymous and confidential and, thus, will not violate the privacy or dignity of any of the participants including the schools themselves.

A report of the findings from your school, that you can use to the benefit of your pupils, parents and teachers, will be submitted to you in 2002. The results from all five schools will then form the basis of the rest of the study, which should be of great benefit to the children of Swaziland generally.

Please consider my request favorably.

Yours truly,

Mrs. Lynette Monadjem
(MSc, BEd, HED).

Appendix II: Parent cover letter and questionnaire

Parent cover letter

Lynette Monadjem
(address and
telephone number of
researcher)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Grade 5 classes of 5 schools in Swaziland have been selected for a study on the relationship between parents and schools done by Mrs. L. Monadjem from UNISA.

_____ (name of school) is one of those selected. Please fill in the following questionnaire to tell me about your relationship with this school. There are no right or wrong answers but your opinions will help us to provide your children with better education and will help the school to meet your needs as parents since each school will receive a report of the results. Completing the questionnaire is completely voluntary but it should only take a few minutes and will really benefit your children and yourselves in the future. The questionnaire is completely confidential and anonymous. I will not know who you are and the school will not see the questionnaires. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire or discuss it with other parents before returning it to the school.

I would be most grateful if you would complete the questionnaire and return it to the school in its sealed envelope by _____.

The children will each get a few sweets on the return of your completed questionnaire, this is to encourage them to remember to give it to you.

Please feel free to contact me by telephone if you have any queries.

Thank you very much for your help,

Yours truly,

Mrs Lynette Monadjem (Researcher).
MSc, HED, BEd.

B. Families get involved in different ways at school or at home. Which of the following have you done THIS YEAR with your Grade 5 child?

Please circle one choice for each statement:

- 1 Means you do NOT do this
- 2 Means you have NOT done this yet this year
- 3 Means you have done this ONCE or a FEW TIMES this year
- 4 Means you have done this MANY TIMES this year

I

16. Talk to my child about school work	1	2	3	4
17. Visit the classroom	1	2	3	4
18. Read to my child	1	2	3	4
19. Listen to my child read	1	2	3	4
20. Help my child with homework	1	2	3	4
21. Check that my child has done his/her homework	1	2	3	4
22. See that my child makes up work after being absent	1	2	3	4
23. Listen to, or read, a story my child wrote	1	2	3	4
24. Practice spelling or other skills before a test	1	2	3	4
25. Talk to my child about TV programmes	1	2	3	4
26. Play games at home to teach my child new things	1	2	3	4
27. Teach my child household chores	1	2	3	4
28. Talk with the teacher on the phone or at school	1	2	3	4
29. Go to PTA/PTO meetings	1	2	3	4
30. Go to sports events at the school	1	2	3	4
31. Go to plays, musical or other social or cultural events at the school	1	2	3	4
32. Go to parent-teacher evenings or meetings	1	2	3	4
33. Do fundraising for the school	1	2	3	4
34. Take my child to museums, libraries, air shows or other educational venues	1	2	3	4
35. Limit the amount of time my child watches TV	1	2	3	4
36. Have rules about homework	1	2	3	4

C. Schools contact families in different ways.

CIRCLE one choice to show whether the school has done these things this YEAR....

- 1 Means the school does NOT do this**
- 2 Means the school does this but COULD DO MUCH BETTER**
- 3 Means the school DOES this FAIRLY WELL**
- 4 Means the school DOES this VERY WELL**

The school.....

37.	Tells me how my child is doing at school	1	2	3	4
38.	Tells me what skills my child needs to learn each year	1	2	3	4
39.	Asks me to check my child's homework	1	2	3	4
40.	Gives me ideas of how to help my child at home	1	2	3	4
41.	Asks me to volunteer for a few hours at the school	1	2	3	4
42.	Sends home clear notices that can be read	1	2	3	4
43.	Invites me to events at the school	1	2	3	4
44.	Invites me to parent-teacher meetings at school	1	2	3	4
45.	Sends home news about things happening at school	1	2	3	4
46.	Asks me to raise funds for the school	1	2	3	4
47.	Asks me for information about my child	1	2	3	4
48.	Asks me to help make decisions about what and how my child is taught	1	2	3	4
49.	Asks me to help make decisions about school staff	1	2	3	4
50.	Asks me to help make decisions about school discipline	1	2	3	4
51.	Asks me to help make decisions about school uniform	1	2	3	4
52.	Asks me to help make decisions about how school funds are spent	1	2	3	4
53.	Asks the community to play a role in the children's schooling	1	2	3	4
54.	Involves local businesses and cultural organisations in my child's schooling	1	2	3	4

Please turn over.....

D. Please answer the following questions, they are needed for statistical purposes. Remember your answers are anonymous and confidential.

Please CIRCLE one option for each statement:

- a. My Grade 5 child is a: **girl / boy**
- b. I am the child's: **parent / guardian**
- c. I expect my child to finish: **primary school / high school / college / university**
- d. I am: **single / married / divorced / remarried**
- e. My age is? **20- 30 / 30-40/ Above 40**
- f. I am: **employed / unemployed**
- g. I am: **male / female**
- h. I completed: **no formal education / primary school / high school / college / university**
- i. I am: **Black / Coloured / White / Asian**
- j. My home language is: **siSwati / English / Portuguese/ other**
- k. My families yearly income is:
 - Less than E6000**
 - E6 000-E18 000**
 - E 18 000 – E 36 000**
 - E 36 000 – E 52 000**
 - E52 000 – E84 000**
 - Above E84 000**
- l. The name of the school my child attends is _____

Thank you very much for helping me to help our children have a better future !

Appendix 3: siSwati translation of the parent questionnaire

A. Ngicela kwati kutsi ucabangani ngalesikolwa. Loku kutasisita kutsi silungisele likusasa.

Uyacelwa kutsi wente INDINGILIZI kulowo mbono lowukhetsile:

- 1 Usho kutsi AWUVUMELANI NHLOBO NALOMBONO
- 2 Usho kutsi AWUVUMELANI KAKHULU NALOMBONO
- 3 Usho kutsi UVUMA KANCANE-NJE
- 4 Usho kutsi UVUMA KAKHULU

Sibonelo: Ngiyatsandza kukhulumisana nemntfwana wami 1 2 3 4
(Kusho kutsi uvumelana kakhulu nalombono)

Ucabangani ngaloku....

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Lesi sikolwa lesikahle kakhulu | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Botishela bayamnakelela umntfwanami | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Umntfwanami uyatsandza kukhuluma ngesikolwa sakhe nakasekhaya | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Umntfwanami ngifuna aniketwe kakhulu umsebenti wesikolwa latawenta ekhaya | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Ngitiva ngemukelekile kulesikolwa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Batali labaningi lengibatiko bayasita lapha esikolweni | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Mine nesikolwa sinemicondvo lefanako mayelana nemntfwanami | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Ngingamsita umntfwanami ekufundzeni | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Ngingamsita umntfwanami etibalweni | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Ngingamsita kancono umntfwanami uma botishela bebanganginika imicondvo leminingi | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Umntfwanami ufundza ngalokwenele kulesikolwa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. Batali bafaka sandla kakhulu emabangeni laphansi | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. Lesikolwa yinzawo lenhle kubantfwana nebatali | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Lesikolwa asitsintsani nami nje kuphela uma kufuneka timali noma umntfwana angatiphatsi kahle | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. Tishela wemntfwanami uyatsandza kuva imibono yami | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

B. Imindeni itibandzakanya ngetindlela letinengi kulokwenteka ekhaya nasesikolweni. Kuloko lokulandzelako ngukuphi lokwentile nemtfwanakho lofundza libanga lesihlanu?

Yenta INDINGILIZI kuloko lokukhetsile:

- 1 Usho kutsi AWUKWENTI loku
- 2 Usho kutsi USENGAKAKWENTI loko kulomnyaka
- 3 Usho kutsi loko UKWENTE KANYE noma kambalwa kulomnyaka
- 4 Usho kutsi loku UKWENTE KANENGI KULOMNYAKA

Ngiya

16. Kukhuluma nemntfwanami ngemsebenti wesikolwa	1	2	3	4
17. Vakashela tindlu tekufundzela	1	2	3	4
18. Mfundzela umntfwanami	1	2	3	4
19. Mlalela umntfwanami afundza	1	2	3	4
20. Msita umntfwanami emsebentini wesikolwa labuya nawo ekhaya	1	2	3	4
21. Buka kutsi umntfwanami umwentile umsebenti wesikolwa labuya nawo ekhaya	1	2	3	4
22. Bona kutsi umntfwanami uyawenta umsebenti wesikolwa lowentiwe nakangekho esikolweni	1	2	3	4
23. Lalela noma ngifundze indzaba lebhawle ngumntfwanami	1	2	3	4
24. Lungiselela kubhala kahle emagama nekubona kutsi unawo nalamanye emakhono lafunekako ngaphambi kwesivivinyo	1	2	3	4
25. Khuluma nemntfwanami ngeluhlelo lwa-Mabona kudze (iTV)	1	2	3	4
26. Dlala imidlalo ekhaya ngenhloso yekufundzisa umntfwanami tintfo letinsha	1	2	3	4
27. Mfundzisa umntfwanami imisebenti yasekhaya	1	2	3	4
28. Khulumisana natishela ngelucingo noma buso nebuso esikolweni	1	2	3	4
29. Ya emihlanganweni yema PTA noma ema PTO	1	2	3	4
30. Ya emidlalweni yesikolwa	1	2	3	4
31. Ya emidlalweni, emiculweni nakuletinye tintfo letihambelana nemasiko esikolweni	1	2	3	4
32. Ya emibutfwaneni yebatali nematishela	1	2	3	4
33. Sakhela sikolwa timali	1	2	3	4
34. Muyisa umntfwanami etindzaweni letifana nase msamo, emtatjeni wetincwadzi, emibukisweni yetindiza nalokunye lokufundzisako	1	2	3	4
35. Bona kutsi umntfwanami akacitsi sikhatsi lesiningi abukela i-TV	1	2	3	4
36. Yabeka imitsetfo lesita mayelana nemsebenti wesikolwa labuya nawo ekhaya	1	2	3	4

C. Tikolwa titsintsana nebatali ngetindlela letinengi.

Yenta INDINGILIZI kutjengisa kutsi sikolwa sitentile yini lentintfo letilandzelako kulomnyaka.

- 1 Usho kutsi sikolwa ASIKWENTI loko
- 2 Usho kutsi siyakwenta loku kodvwa SINGENTA KAKHULU
- 3 Usho kutsi SIKWENTA KAHLE KAKHULU
- 4 Usho kutsi sikolwa SIKWENTA KAHLE LOKU

Sikolwa.....

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 37.Siyangatisa kutsi umntfwanami uchubanjani | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 38. Siyangitjela kutsi nguwapfi emakhono lafenele awafundze kulowo nalowomnyaka | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. Siyangicela kutsi ngibuke umsebenti wesikolwa labuya nawo ekhaya umntfwanami | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. Siyanginika imicondvo yekutsi ngingamsita kanjani untfwanami ekhaya | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 41. Siyangicela kutsi ngisite esikolweni ema- awa lambalwa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 42. Sitfumela tincwadzi letibhalwe kahle futsi letifundzekako | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 43.Siyangimema emicimbini yesikolwa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 44.Siyangimema emihlanganweni yebatali nematishela esikolweni | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 45.Siyayitfumela imibiko ngetintfo letenteka esikolweni | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 46. Siyangicela kutsi ngicokelele timali letidzingwa sikolwa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 47. Siyangicela kutsi ngisitjele ngemntfwanami | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 48. Singicela kutsi ngibeke imibono ngekutsi umntfwanami afundzeni futsi afundze kanjani | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 49. Siyangicela kutsi ngibeke imibono ngebafundzisi | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 50.Siyangicela kutsi ngibeke imibono ngekuphatfwa kwebantwana esikolweni | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 51.Siyangicela kutsi ngibeke imibono ngetembatfo tesikolwa | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 52.Siyangicela kutsi ngibeke imibono ngekutsi timali tesikolwa tisetjentiswa njani | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 53..Siyawucela umphakatsi udlale indzima emfundvweni yebantfwana | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 54. Siyabafaka bosomabhizinisi netinhlango temphakatsi ekufundzeni kwebantfwana | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

D. Uyacelwa kutsi uphendvule lemibuto lelandzelako lapha. Loku kuyadzingakala laphosekubalwa. Khumbula kutsi timphendvulo takho atinawatiwa kutsi tabani, futsi titaba sifuba sakho.

Uyacelwa kutsi ubeke luphawu lwe **INDINGILIZI** kulowo nalowombono:

- a. Umntfwanami welibanga lesihlanu: yintfombatana / ngumfana
- b. Ngingumtali / ngingumgcini wemntfwana
- c. Ngibheke kutsi umntfwanami acedze esikoleni lesincane / lesiphakeme/ ekolishi / enyuvesi
- d. Angikashadi / ngishadile / ngidivosile / ngashada futsi / widowed?
- e. Uneminyaka lemingaki wena? 20- 30 / 30-40/ ngetula kwa 40
- f. Ngicashiwe / angikacashwa
- g. Ngiwesilisa / ngiwesifazane
- h. Angikafundzi / ngacedza esikolweni lesincane / lesiphakeme / ekolishi / enyuvesi
- i. Ngimnyama / ngilikalatsi / ngimhlophe / ngiLindiya
- j. Lulwimi lwami siSwati, Singisi, Siphuthukezi / lolunye
- k. Imali lengenako ekhaya ngemnyaka: Ingaphansi kwa E6000
 Isemkhatsini wa E6 000 na E18 000
 Isemkhatsini wa E 18 000 na E 36 000
 Isemkhatsini wa E 36 000 na E 52 000
 Isemkhatsini wa E52 000 na E84 000
 Ingetulu kwa E84 000

Ngiyabonga kutsi ningisite kutsi ngisite bantfwabetfu kutsi babe nelikusasa lelincono!

Appendix IV: Interview guide for the individual teacher interviews

The following topics will be discussed:

1. What do you feel your **role** is as a **teacher**?
2. What is the **parent's role/ duty** towards their child's education, what is a good parent? What valuable skills/attributes do they have? Are they fulfilling their roles adequately? Describe the "typical" parent.
3. How much do you feel these roles **overlap**? What is the parent's relationship with the school?
4. Which of the following **activities do** parents play a role in: Fund raising, volunteering in the classroom, helping their children at home with homework and projects, discipline, making decisions about the way the school is run, discipline, staffing, school uniform, curriculum, how pupils are taught, taking their children on educational trips/activities, attending social, sports and cultural events, attending parent-teacher meetings, signing homework books, attending PTA, attending parent workshops, responding to school communications, setting rules about homework?
5. Which of these activities **should** parents play a role in. How big a role?
6. Would you find any of these roles **uncomfortable** and why? Would parents be willing to play a bigger role if they knew what to do?
7. How often and in what ways do you **communicate** with parents? What language is used?
8. Does the school help the parent with **basic parenting skills**?
9. Does the school provide guidance on how parents can **help at home**, ask parents to **volunteer, fundraise, invite into classroom, and make decisions**?
10. Should parents be more involved? Why are they not more involved? **Barriers** ?
11. Does the school ask for or receive any help or input from the **local community, businesses and agencies**?
12. Where you given any **training** in parental involvement at college or in service?
13. Who is on the school committee and how is it elected? What is the difference between its function and that of the PTA?
14. Do you have anything to add?

Appendix V- Materials given to the parents at the workshop

Dear Parents,

The chart below is to help you determine whether you are providing an environment that will lead to good school learning for your child. You do not need to hand in this chart, it is for your information only and you can use it to guide future efforts. If you make major changes you should see clear results in about six months. Your child is likely to become more interested in school and more eager to do his/her best. You should also see your child's test scores and marks go up.

	Almost always true	Sometimes true	Rarely or never true
Does your home encourage learning? Score two points for a statement that is almost always true of your home; score one point if its "sometimes true"; score zero if it's "rarely or never true".			
1. Everyone in my family has a household responsibility, at least one chore that must be done on time.			
2. We have regular times for members of the family to eat sleep, play, work, and study.			
3. Schoolwork and reading come before play, TV, or even other work.			
4. I praise my child for good schoolwork, sometimes in front of other people.			
5. My child has a quiet place to study, a desk or table at which to work, and books, including a dictionary or other reference material.			
6. The members of my family talk about hobbies, games, news, the books we are reading, and the movies and TV programmes we have seen.			
7. The family visits museums, libraries, zoos, historical sites and other places of interest.			
8. I encourage good speech habits, helping my child to use the correct words and phrases and to learn new ones.			
9. At dinner, or some other daily occasion, our family talks about the day's events. Everyone has a chance to speak and be listened to.			
10. I know my child's current teacher; what my child is doing in school; and which learning materials are being used.			
11. I expect quality work and a good grade. I know my child's strengths and weaknesses and give encouragement and special help when they are needed.			
12. I talk to my child about the future, about planning for high school and college, and about aiming for a high level of education and a good job.			
Total points			

(From Jantes 1995)

The more points you scored the better! A maximum of 24 points could be scored.

If you scored ten points or more your home ranks in the top quarter of homes in terms of the support and encouragement you give your child for school learning.

If you scored 7 to 10 points, you are average in the support you give your child for school learning.

If you scored six or lower, your home is in the bottom quarter in terms of the amount of support you give your child for school learning.



Paired reading

This technique has been found to improve a child's reading accuracy and comprehension, as well as his attitude to reading and his relationship with his parents.

Rules for successful paired reading

1. Paired reading is supposed to be fun, the more relaxed, calm parent or relative should do the reading with the child. The child should never be shouted at, punished or otherwise treated negatively if he makes mistakes while reading.
2. The parent or relative should spend at least 5 min a day, 5 days a week, doing the reading. It is Ok to spend longer if both the parent and child are enjoying themselves but frequent short sessions are more successful than long sessions with big breaks in between.

Steps for paired reading

1. The child should choose a book he is interested in. It doesn't matter if it is a year or two above his reading level. The book should NOT be a schoolbook.
2. Before opening the book the parent and child should discuss the title of the book and look at the cover. They should try to guess what the story is about.
3. The child should then start reading.
4. The child and parent should agree on a signal before starting to read that the child will use to indicate that he needs help (such as tapping the parent on the leg).
5. Whenever the child signals the parent for help the parent should supply the child with the missing word and then the child should continue reading.
6. At the end of the chapter or section the parent should:
 - ask the child to explain what he has been reading about
 - ask how, when, where, who and why questions
 - discuss the story line with the child
 - ask the child to predict what will happen next in the story
 - explain any new words to the child
 - discuss pictures with the child

Remember at all times that this method only works if the child is having FUN!

(From Topping 1995)

A few other strategies for improving your child's school success:

Maths –

1. Practice time tables. Do not let the child say "4, 8, 12, ...", rather ask "what is 6 X 7?" etc
2. Make word sums for your child based on home situations. E.g. "A mother go to the shop, she buys 5 apples for 16c each, 200g of flour at E6/kg, how much does she spend?"
3. When cooking, show your child fractions. E.g. "If I cut the carrot into six pieces and eat 5 of them, I have eaten five sixths of the carrot".
4. Encourage your child to have a positive attitude to maths and not to fear it.

English –

Children whose home language is not English need to hear it in the home as well as at school. There are many words and concepts that are discussed in the home that never arise at the school. Thus, One parent should speak the home language and the other should speak English. The child can reply in either language.

Appendix VI: Interview guide for the parent interviews

Thank parent, explain purpose of interview and ask permission to film. EXPLAIN CONFIDENTIALITY.

Biographical data

Parent's name:

Gender of parent:

Parent, guardian, relative?

School child attends:

Grade child is in:

Name of child?

Does the child stay with you?

Are you married, single, divorced, remarried, widowed?

Do you live with your partner?

What is your highest level of education? Primary, secondary, tertiary?

What is your age?

What is your occupation?

Number of other children and ages:

Interview

1. Please describe your role as a parent towards your child's education.
2. What is the teacher's role?
3. Please describe your relationship with/experiences with the teacher/school
4. In what ways are you currently involved:
 - At school (PTA, sports, parent-teacher)
 - At home (homework)
 - Making decisions
5. Biggest barriers to involvement?
6. **What would you like, and could manage, to do in terms of P.I. (at home, at school, decisions):**
 - **How long**
 - **How often**
 - **Why?**

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