A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF LEARNERS IN RURAL NAMIBIA

by

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DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I, Miriam Ndalilashiwa Hamunyela, declare that the thesis which I hereby submit for the degree PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR in Adult education and Community Development at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary education institution.

I also declare that as far as I am aware, all references used and made in this dissertation have been cited and acknowledged.

Signed: ……………………

Date: 31 March 2008
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late sister, Martha Ndapewoshali Hamunyela.
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KEY WORDS

Critical analysis
Academic education
Involvement
Communication
Participation
Relationship
Support
Rural
Professional educator
Parent
SUMMARY

The role of parents in the education of learners as well as the relationships between and amongst parents and professional educators has long been of interest to researchers and practitioners at all levels of public and private education. The consistent findings that the involvement of parents positively influences educational quality and learners’ academic achievement are well documented. However, the findings also concluded that parental involvement is difficult to implement in rural schools and its practices are more likely to take root in schools that serve urban and suburban populations than in schools that serve rural and low-income populations. Moreover, in most schools where parental involvement is functional, parents are more involved in non-academic activities than academic activities. Against this background, it can be stated that there is insufficient empirical research-based information on whether and how parental involvement in academic education of learners can be practised in economically distressed contexts, especially in Namibia. Therefore, the current study intended to critically analyse whether and how do professional educators and parents of rural lower primary schools in Namibia perceive, think about and practise involvement in the academic education of learners.

The framework of this study is based on Critical and Ecological Theories. The Ecological Theory regards both parents and schools as valuable contributors to children’s learning. The critical theory claims that there is no absolute knowledge that people can grasp. All people encounter are opinions. Hence, this study challenged a long held ideal and belief of the capitalist culture in regard to positioning activities, and knowledge and resources of poor families as subordinate.

The study employed a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodological research designs. A survey about professional educators’ perceptions on parental involvement was sent to 205 schools (of which 87 responded) to collect quantitative data for Phase 1 of the study. Frequency analysis was done to identify the meaning of the quantitative data. The analysis of quantitative data grouped schools into 3 groups (high, intermediate and low) according to their levels of practising parental involvement. Six schools (2 per group) were selected for Phase 2 of the study. Interviews were conducted among 18 professional educators and 12 parents of the six schools to collect qualitative data on their perspectives, attitudes and practices of parental involvement. Content analysis was made use of to explore meaningful aspects and indicators of parental involvement in lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region.
The following indicators revealed by the professional educators’ and parents’ reported experiences of parental involvement practice qualify the researched schools to be regarded as demonstrating parental involvement in learners’ academic education: conducive climate and respectful relationship; provision of educational opportunities to parents; use of community resources; provision of opportunities for technical support to parents; use of various and possible communication options; power sharing with parents and encouraging them to actively participate in decision-making bodies; and professional educators’ positive attitude towards involvement.
ACRONYMS

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BETS: Basic Education Teacher Diploma
ETP: Educational Theory and Practice
HIV: Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
MBESC: Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MEC: Ministry of Education and Culture
MHETEC: Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation
MIB: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
SWA: South West Africa
WCER: Wisconsin Centre for Educational Research
CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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DATE CONSIDERED
16 March 2007

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE
APPROVED

This ethical clearance is valid for a period of 3 years and may be renewed upon application

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE
Dr S Human-Vogel

DATE
19 March 2007

CC
Dr C J G Bender
Jeannie Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for permission and informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.