

**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.

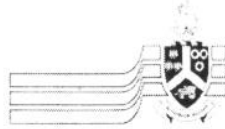
The framework of this study is based on Critical and Ecological Theories. The Ecological Theory regards both parents and schools as valuable contributors to children's learning. The critical theory claims that there is no absolute knowledge that people can grasp. All people encounter are opinions. Hence, 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



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16 March 2007

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.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIM OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention of this study was to investigate the practice of parental involvement in academic education of learners as it is happening in Namibia's rural lower primary schools. Specifically, the study investigates whether and how principals and teachers (professional educators) from northern Namibia's rural area perceive and practise parental involvement for the promotion of learners' academic learning. The same study further investigates what parents do to support schools in educating children academically. Moreover, the study further seeks to understand how parental involvement as an approach to education is context bound, i.e, the ways parents are involved in their children's academic education depending upon the context and conditions in which the school operates as well as the culture of the people who live in a specific environment.

Before Namibia's independence in 1990, the government under colonial rule (the former South African government) did not take advantage of the role that all stakeholders, especially parents, were capable of playing in the education of learners in schools. Instead of making use of parents and other community members to contribute to learners' effective learning and academic growth, the colonial rule denied parents this opportunity to support their own children. Parents were not allowed to constructively criticise or give valuable input into the education of their children.

Since Namibia's independence in 1990, the country's education system has been in transformation inspiring politicians (education is a legitimate political issue) and educators to recognise the importance of parental involvement in education. They believe such involvement will raise the standard of young people's education (Snyder, Angula, Makuwa & Hailombe, 1999). The education transformation attempts to create a paradigm which is characterised by the acceptance of parents' involvement rather than exclusion, recognises the need for connections and partnerships, tries to redress the discriminative policy (Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), 1993) that promoted poor and ineffective education in Namibian schools, and tries to remove the barriers that kept Namibian children from experiencing quality education. Reform looks backward and seeks to recapture that which requires restoration and alternately looks forward to successful redress (MEC, 1993). Education reform is an acknowledgement of the fact that the world is changing faster than it

was, and the pace of change accelerates. Whitaker (1993) concurs as he states that *“For an education system to be in tune with change it needs to be flexible, adaptable, and responsive to constantly changing circumstances and needs”* (Whitaker, 1993: 6).

The starting point for the education transformation process in Namibia is Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution (1991), which states that:

“All persons shall have the right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge” (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) 1991: 12).

The right to education includes the right to be involved in, contribute to and support education processes. Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution gives parents the right and legal responsibility for supporting schools in providing education to Namibian children. Families have a right to participate in and support school activities that affect their lives and the lives of their children. As representatives of their children, they have a right to contribute to the decisions that affect their children’s education (Olsen, Chang, Salazar, Loang, McCall, Perez, McClain, & Raffel, 1994). Until 1990 these fundamental rights of access and the right to education were for so long denied to most parents and their children in many African countries and in Namibia in particular. This was particularly true for blacks and marginalised people because of the colonial and apartheid education systems. I find it proper for the understanding and the aims of this study to use the term ‘black’ as the racial classification of disadvantaged people in Namibia. Dahlstrom (2002) argues that, *“it is almost impossible to understand anything in post-colonial African society if we pretend that this classification does not persist as a social signifier in the post-colonial society”* (Dahlstrom, 2002: 8).

The South African system of Bantu and Discriminatory (Swarts, 1998) or Segregatory (MEC, 1993) Education as provided to the people of the then South West Africa (SWA) resulted in school-dropouts, lack of interest in and understanding of the value of education to many black Namibian adults, and eventually poorly skilled and unskilled individuals. In addition Swarts (1998) states that the rudimentary curriculum of Bantu and Segregated education equipped black Namibians to perform unskilled work, consistent with Verwoerd’s policy, which according to Ellis (1984) declared that *“there is no place for the native in the European community, above the level of certain*

forms of labour When I have control of natives education I will reform it so that the natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them ...” (Ellis, 1984: 23). Furthermore, segregated education in the then SWA, was reflected by the system specially designed to fashion black people into ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’ (Swarts, 1998) as well as garden layers and house builders for European settlers (United Nations Institute for Namibia, 1986). Swarts further explains that the discriminatory system “*with a restricted curriculum spanning not more than four years, consisting of reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and singing in the vernacular*” was designed to equip black Namibians to perform unskilled work. Some black adults in Namibia have never been to school. Many of those who were fortunate enough to go to school or receive some schooling (Swarts, 1998) never proceeded beyond basic education (MEC, 1993; United Nations Institute for Namibia, 1986). As parents, they were denied opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process affecting their children’s lives, because “*schools were simply not open to most of our parents*” (MEC, 1993: 27). As a result of the undemocratic character of the discriminatory system of the education system in the then SWA, parents had a little chance of supporting school activities. Moreover, due to the former education system’s lack of enlightenment about education and its importance to indigenous people, large numbers of parents had little or no interest in supporting the education system (MEC, 1993).

Today, Namibia has an apartheid legacy of many uneducated and uneducable, unemployed and unemployable people. A serious education backlog in Namibia caused too little (if ever) development of the skills that are needed (MEC, 1993). These sad people are the true legacy of the apartheid education system of the past (Swarts, 1998; Amukugo, 1993; Ellis, 1984). Hence, parents cannot react effectively to the education-related challenges they face or are faced by their children. It is a fact that a discriminatory system kept Namibian parents from going to school to receive education (MEC, 1993). MEC (1993) further states that parents’ basic literacy is a pre-requisite for the success of child education. Therefore, literacy empowers parents to participate more fully in the life of society of which schools are part, and acquire skills and confidence in their own abilities to exercise their rights and responsibilities in supporting their children’s education. If we are really committed to education for all, then our commitment should promote parental involvement and support parents’ life long learning (MEC, 1993). Therefore, it is now the responsibility of the schools to nurture the idea of lifelong learning among parents and community members in order to empower them for school support. Namibia, as a signatory to the “World Declaration on Education for All” (5-9 March, 1990, Jomtien), interpreted its constitutional intentions into a policy for educational reform and development by publishing “*Towards Education for All*” (MEC, 1993).

Education for all means access to education and amending education for quality and better education, and is necessarily a partnership between the schools and parents (Cherryholmes, 1998; MEC, 1993). The then new government in Namibia was desperately seeking means of redressing educational imbalances of the past, and preventing the recurrence thereof by improving and changing educational policies. Changes in Namibia's educational policies emphasise the implementation and promotion of education for all, expansion of access to education and improvement in the quality of education in schools, hence proclaiming the practice of involvement, partnership and networking between schools and families as policy in schools (MEC, 1993). Achieving this important reform goal depends heavily on the active participation and support of potential partners including parents who have had no strong relationship with schools in the past (Fullan, 1998). The Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia states that, "*Improving the quality of our schools is a responsibility we share*" (MEC, 1993: 40).

In a contextual sense, accessibility to education will become meaningful if the former marginalised and disadvantaged communities are encouraged and welcomed to participate in the education of their children. In line with this understanding, Namibia's education reform tries to address the barriers that keep Namibian people from contributing to and experiencing quality education and lifelong learning which, according to our constitution, are now fundamental rights. Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution gives all residents of a new democratic Namibia the right and legal responsibility for supporting educational opportunities for all children in Namibia (MIB, 1991). Namibia needs educators and parents who devote themselves to the enhancement of the learners' education in schools so that the education system may succeed in producing an educated, skilled and employable population.

Therefore, it was thus registered that the act of educating is indivisible and cannot be split into isolated spheres of home and school as this would be detrimental to the social, emotional and cognitive development of the learners. Hence, parental involvement has moved to the forefront of Namibian education reform (MEC, 1993). In line with education reform, the new Namibian government encourages schools to aim for quality education and higher academic achievement, improved school attendance, positive student attitudes toward school, and better student grades (MEC, 1993). It should be the purpose of all schools to increase the teachers' efficacy and consequently provide effective education to children. Provision of effective education includes recognition of the educational benefits of parental involvement in children's education. Tapping the knowledge and skills of parents through school-to-home communication makes a concrete and great

contribution to instruction and curriculum enrichment (Hornby, 2000). These goals should motivate schools to work toward greater involvement with parents.

Advocates of parental involvement suggest that it requires the recognition of parents by educators as co-responsible partners in the learning process of learners (Haggis, 1991; Dekker & Lemmer, 1993; Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994; Fullan, 1998; Sanders & Epstein, 1998). School management teams aim for good school governance. According to Namibian Education Act, Number 16 of 2001, involving parents and collaborating with community in school governance issues and decisions is an effective and wise decision making strategy (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC), 2001). Hence, parents should also participate in school improvement teams and school boards to contribute to effective and good governance of the school. Sanders (1996) asserts that schools should get parents' perspectives and influence in school life, policies and decisions. Therefore, according to Burke and Picus (2001); Chapman and Aspin (1997); Dekker and Lemmer (1993); Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis (2002); Olsen et al. (1994); Phelps (1999) and MEC (1993), it is the school's role and responsibility to:

- invite and encourage parents to visit the school, and offer them entry into some of the learning activities,
- make parents aware of their rights and responsibilities with regard to the support of the child's whole development,
- provide education opportunities for parents in the development of their understanding of social and economic issues, curriculum, learning methods and the school organizational changes, which make parents to respond and contribute to the learning process.

Parents should work together with schools to establish Parent-Teacher Organisations, thus ensuring sustained parental engagement in the life of school.

Supporters of parental involvement further contend that parents are obliged and responsible for showing their children that school and education are important (Holmes, 1998). It is vital for parents to understand that in the absence of their responsibility and genuine support for schools, academic education for their children is almost impossible. Parents need to understand that the success of their children's academic education in schools depends on their cooperation, support and active involvement in school activities (Mhlambo, 1994; Holmes, 1998). Therefore, it is the parents' task to parent children well and send them to school on a daily basis ready and motivated for academic success in schools.

Chapman and Aspin (1997) and the Namibian Education Act No. 16 of 2001 (MBEC, 2001) present the roles and responsibilities of families relative to supporting their children's academic education. Among these, parents need to assume roles as teachers, policy and decisions makers, advisors, problem-solvers, partners, inspectors and supervisors. However the big question remains. Do parents and families really know and understand what their roles, rights and responsibilities are concerning their involvement in the academic education of their children? Do they know that they have an obligation to support schools in educating children academically? Do they know how to go about fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in partnership with schools? Research results suggest the answer to these questions is no (Burke & Picus, 2001 and Lapp, Fisher, Flood & Moore, 2002). Many parents and family members are still not aware of their legal rights in accessing appropriate services to support their children's education in schools (Mhlambo, 1994; Holmes, 1998).

Another crucial question is, "Do schools value and accept parent's rights to their children's academic education?" Olsen et al. (1994) indicate a strong anti-parental sentiment among professionals. Schools regard parent involvement as a problem. They do not show support for it (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). They feel teaching is the responsibility of educated and professionally qualified people. Parents do not have resources and skills to be advocates for their children's needs and to assist in academic learning. Therefore, when parents want to be involved, "*teachers appear to feel that parents trespass on their authority and autonomy. They feel their rights are being infringed upon when parents demand to know about curriculum*" (Olsen et al., 1994:101).

The previous few pages are presented in an attempt to contextualise the study. The brief introduction about the background of education in Namibia before and after independence indicates how the topic is established in the literature and built on the experience of education in Namibia. The remaining pages of this introductory chapter present an overview of the whole dissertation. It introduces the aims and objectives of the study, specifies research questions, indicates the design and methodology followed to address the research problem, clarifies main concepts used throughout this thesis and concludes with the outline of the rest of the dissertation.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale of the study is the reason that motivated the researcher to embark on a study of a specific topic (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Circumstances that motivated me to undertake this study relate to my experiences in education before and after the independence of Namibia as well as to the

information acquired from reviewing the comprehensive literature. The rationale for the study is briefly described in the following section.

For seventeen years I have served as one of the implementers of educational reform in colleges of education in Namibia, training teachers for Basic Education (grade 1-10) in the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) programme. I was responsible for teaching Educational Theory and Practice (ETP). One of the rationales of ETP is to ensure that the philosophy of quality education, embedded in educational reform, is taught throughout the BETD programme, and that this philosophy should be reflected in educators' professional practice in the field (ETP Curriculum (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) & Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation (MHETEC), 2001). The rationale of ETP translates in practical terms the important goal of Namibia's main educational reform policy improvement for quality education in schools.

Against this background, I had a sincere desire to find out whether and how lower primary schools involve parents in the education (particularly academic) of learners. Interest in finding out how a policy for education reform and development (as far as parental involvement is concerned) is contextually realised partly motivated the carrying out of this research (Brubacher, Case and Reagan, 1994). Chatterji (2004: 7) concurs as he states "*social experiments can involve the testing of governmental policies*".

Moreover, the quest for understanding of how parental involvement is practised in rural lower primary schools was further enhanced by a comprehensive review of the findings of research studies on the implementation of parental involvement in schools to support children's education done in other African countries as well as countries outside Africa (Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Burke & Picus, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Phelps, 1999; Sanders, 1999; Fink & Stoll, 1998; Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Richardson, 1997; Heneveld & Craig, 1996; Dekker & Lemmer, 1993). The recommended approaches, sometimes referred to as types or activities of involvement, are: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision- making and collaborating with community (Burke & Picus, 2001; Epstein et al., 2002; Phelps, 1999; Sanders, 1999; 2001; Sanders & Epstein, 1998). These researchers studied parental involvement in the education of learners as an aspect of school innovation.

According to Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (1981) as cited in Heneveld and Craig, (1996: 13), school improvement is the school's attempt to "*implement an innovation with the*

ultimate aim of producing positively valuable changes in student learning outcomes, in teachers' skills and attitudes and in institutional functioning.”

Effective approaches to parental involvement that serve as frameworks for implementation to be used by schools are well described and praised by many of the researchers. Many of the research findings reviewed indicate that parents of all ethnicity and classes are similar in one respect: they value and desire education and thus consider education of their children important (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993; Phelps, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1994). In agreement, Hornby (2000) asserts that parents are willing to collaborate with teachers and are able to contribute more to school activities that result in their children making greater progress. To the contrary, other researchers' findings indicate that parents are reluctant to support schools to promote learners' academic education (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993; Fink & Stoll, 1998; Epstein et al., 2002). In addition, Richardson's (1997) findings indicate that teachers and administrators want to involve parents more but they do not know the best ways to do so.

The literature also indicates that although parental involvement is crucial for learners' education, parents and families from poor socio-economic backgrounds lack interest and willingness to support the academic aspect of their children's education (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Burke & Picus, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The literature indicates that the conclusion drawn by most studies is that if schools encourage parental involvement skilfully and with welfare of learners as the focus, it guarantees:

- A remarkable educational growth and significant academic improvement of learners,
 - An increment in teachers' morale and effort, and
 - A tremendous growth in parental support for schools and learners' learning
- (Epstein et al., 2002; Hammond, 2001; Lindsay, 2001; Wisconsin Centre for Educational Research (WCER), 1995).

However, other findings reveal that despite successful and appropriate planning and implementation of parental involvement in low socio-economic status areas, in practice this meets with a lack of parental support and resistance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Lapp et al., 2002; Sanders, 2001). Moreover, other researchers share the same findings that strongly indicate that the involvement of

parents from distressed backgrounds is the most problematic and difficult aspect of changing and improving learners' education in schools (Epstein et al., 2002; Fink & Stoll, 1998; Dekker & Lemmer, 1993).

Some of the findings from studies of parental involvement seem to contradict each other. Some findings say that all parents of all classes are interested and want the best for their children. Therefore, it would seem that well-planned parental involvement would guarantee parents' support for children's education that would culminate in effective learning.

Other findings say parental involvement, regardless of being well planned, is difficult to implement among poor and less-educated parents (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Lapp et al., 2002; Sanders, 2001). Further, still other findings conclude that teachers and administrators do not know the best way to involve parents (Finders & Lewis, 1994). The question is: Who does not know the 'what', the how and the 'why' of parental involvement? These contradictions triggered my concern. If all parents of all ethnicities and classes are similar in the respect that they all value and desire education and thus consider education of their children important, then why is parental involvement difficult to implement in schools, specifically those situated in economically distressed areas? Why are poor, low-income and less-educated families reluctant to support schools for children's education? Were the strategies tried to involve parents compatible with such conditions? Is it parents who lack support or that schools do not know appropriate ways of involving parents? A few researchers' findings report that parental activities identified are not fitting and are not important for high-need and resource-poor schools in 'at-risk' communities (Sanders, 2001). However, the research findings did not elaborate on activities and strategies which are compatible with resource-poor schools in at-risk communities. Their findings do not indicate how parental involvement can be improved and practised differently in a contextually appropriate way in rural schools. Furthermore, Fink and Stoll (1998) argue that international attempts to replicate one country's findings elsewhere or examine the same factors are faced with difficulties. Therefore, they recommend studies to understand the precise context in terms of learners' social class background and school locations.

Moreover, the literature indicates that most schools where parental involvement is functional, parents are more involved in non-academic school-based spaces (activities) than in school-based academic spaces (Civil, Andrade & Anhalt, 2000; Heneveld & Craig, 1996). In addition, Edwards and Knight (1994: 118) found that "*most parental involvement initiatives have not been premised on any analysis of the cycle of children's learning*".

Against this background, I feel that there is insufficient empirical research-based information on whether and how parental involvement can be practised differently and compatibly in economically distressed contexts, especially in Africa. There is insufficient information about parental involvement focusing on supporting learners in academic related activities. For these reasons, I found it worthwhile to conduct an investigation into schools in the rural areas. Consequently, this study investigates typical rural lower primary schools' ways of getting parents involved in and sustaining their involvement in their children's academic education. The following main research question can be formulated as follows:

Whether and how do professional educators (principals, teachers) and parents of rural, lower primary schools in Namibia perceive, think about and practise involvement in the academic education of learners?

The following sub-questions are relevant for the study:

- How is parental involvement perceived and practised by professional educators for supporting learners' academic education in rural lower primary schools?
- How do parents demonstrate their parental involvement in the education of their children?
- How do lower primary schools with high parental involvement organise their involvement strategies and activities differently from schools with intermediate and low parental involvement in rural Namibia?
- What barriers to parental involvement do rural lower primary schools in Namibia experience?
- How do rural lower primary schools in Namibia deal with factors that challenge their efforts to involve parents in learners' academic education?

Research questions provide preliminary direction for the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). They regulate the research methodology and control the study's direction. Examination of parental involvement includes a questioning of "what", 'how' and 'why' (Chatterji, 2004; Edwards & Knight, 1994). Meaningful and critical analysis of a phenomenon, in this study context, parental involvement, is based on relevant research questions. The research questions indicate information this study wants to generate and reasons for and practice of parental involvement, professionals' and parents' experiences, thoughts, opinions and needs related to involvement (Creswell, 2003).

However, because of the nature of this type of research, it is expected that the specification and clarity of the research questions of this study may improve as the research unfolds.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is positioned in a context where rigorous educational reform in Namibia is expected to take place, namely the rural areas. Although some of the expected changes in Namibia did happen, such as replacing sheds with proper wall buildings to make the learning environment conducive, others still need more attention and encouragement. Contextually and democratisation- based education of involving all stakeholders is an example (MEC, 1993). This study focuses particularly on a critical analysis of the involvement of parents in the academic education of their children in Namibian lower primary schools situated in disadvantaged areas from professional educators' and parents' points of view. It is against this background that this study aims to critically analyse whether and how rural lower primary schools in Namibia involve parents in academic education of their children.

The objectives are:

- To explore the perceptions of, and thoughts about parental involvement among lower primary schools and the extent to which those schools in northern Namibia involve parents in their children's academic education.
- To explore how parents demonstrate their parental involvement in the education of their children
- To critically analyse and identify how schools with high parental involvement organise their activities differently from schools with low parental involvement in rural Namibia.
- To identify and critically analyse and describe lower primary schools' ways of dealing with barriers that affect teachers' efforts to involve parents in learners' academic education.

Furthermore, I envision the results of this study to:

- Add new evidence about which specific parental involvement activities and approaches are compatible with Namibia's depressed socio-economic settings and disadvantaged environment;
- Guide Namibian professional educators and parents in the process of educating children to conceptualise the parental involvement issues;

- Enrich perspectives of policymakers, educators and community members at regional and national levels in Namibia where concerns for promoting parental involvement are examined; and
- Contribute to the knowledge base on parental involvement issues in rural areas of Southern Africa.

Moreover, in doing this research I built my expertise and contributed to my professional growth, research skills and knowledge of involving parents in their children's academic education.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework of the study addresses my understanding of the topic of the study (parental involvement) and makes the understanding of the topic explicit (Punch, 2005). Therefore, this study's conceptual framework presents the clarifications of key concepts and a model of parental involvement (which explains the central focus of the study) by describing how environmental systems (principals, teachers and parents) relate to and support each other for the benefit of learners' academic learning and development. The model shows factors (approaches) and indicators (strategies) of parental involvement which have clarified my understanding of the concept of parental involvement. While the clarification of terms is considered appropriate to be presented in Chapter One, approaches and strategies for parental involvement are discussed in Chapter Two of this study. The concepts I would like to define (definitions overlap) in this introductory chapter are Academic Education, Home-School Partnership, Involvement, Communication, Participation, Presence, Relationship, Co-operation, Support, Critical Analysis, Rural, Professional educator and Parent.

1.5.1 Conceptual clarifications

Through concepts elucidation, the researcher radiates light on essential meanings of those concepts and their presumed relationship with each other for the reader to understand the purpose of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Some researchers suggest the delay of the definition of terms until they emerge from the data (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutman and Hanson, 2003). They believe that terms should rise during the research and be defined in the findings section of the final research study. However, I consider it important and helpful to clarify

some terms I have used to help readers understand the research problem and the questions in this study.

1.5.1.1 Critical analysis

Critical analysis is an approach this study took to interrogate the doubtful dispositions, suppressive ideologies and normative theories about parental involvement practices in rural schools (Morrow & Brown in Creswell, 1998). Using ideological methodology, positioned in Critical Theory, this study penetrated and critically questioned the purposes, interests and reasons behind an accepted theory that states that parental involvement practice is very poor (if ever) in schools situated in rural contexts. Using ideological methodology, it was further hoped to evaluate and uncover the interest, power and legitimacy of existing research knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The critical question on the outcomes of existing research is whether that knowledge operates in general interest or it reinforces the status quo.

By critically analysing the vested and generalised theory, critique ideology intended to reveal to rural lower primary schools that the claimed theory about difficulty of parental involvement in rural schools is not natural. The methodology aimed to emancipate rural schools from this oppressive assumption and/or beliefs of existing research orientations, and enlighten them on how they might perform and perpetuate parental involvement processes which are compatible with rural contexts (Creswell, 1998).

1.5.1.2 Academic education

Academic education is defined as affording learners the opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills in formal academic space or spaces that reflect curriculum and instruction (such as teaching of literacy, mathematics and science) required to learn this content (Barton, Drake, Perez, St Louis & George, 2004; Sigh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; Hornby, 2000). Drawing upon these researchers' ideas, the concept of academic education could be understood as scholastic support aimed at enhancing learners' understanding and consequently boosting their performance in academic disciplines. Academic education includes parents' presence, observation and willingness to intervene in their children's classroom activities, and reflects their (parents) involvement in academic education of their children. According to the purpose of this study, the academic education in which parents should be involved includes school activities that parents engage in and those activities, which support and reflect the qualities of schooling directly implicated in learners' learning of academic subject areas or disciplines. I support Bourdieu's extant argument that in

academic areas interactions move parents, teachers and children toward a shared optimal outcome, usually the academic development of the learner (Bourdieu, 1977).

1.5.1.3 Home-school partnership

In general, this catch-all term, according to Crowson and Boyd (1998), means the connections, interactions and all activities happening between the school and home as a thrust toward dismantling the disconnections between them, and to directly or indirectly support and promote the development and growth of learners. The partnership focused by this study agrees with Crowson and Boyd's definition as it understands partnership as the school's ways of making families act as a supplement to promote learners' academic development and growth. Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994) refer to families and schools in this collaboration as critical friends who together operate to complement and mutually support each other to ensure that learners get effective and quality education. Anderson, Herr and Nihlen further clarify their view of a 'critical friend' as a trusted person who offers constructive critique of a person's work within a context of support. Therefore, they recommend that in partnership, families should become critical friends who play devil's advocate roles for the schools so that learners benefit the most (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994).

1.5.1.4 Involvement

Involvement is recognition that parents play a critical part in their children's education. Therefore, this word (involvement) implies that chances are given to parents to support the schools and make them more effective in reaching learning goals (Rugh & Bossert, 1998; MEC, 1993). Barton et al. (2004) present involvement as "*a dynamic, interactive process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with schools and among school actors*". Therefore, they equate involvement with 'engagement' (Barton et al., 2004: 3). Hornby (2000) also relates involvement to participation as he uses these two concepts interchangeably.

Some researchers' understanding of the concept of involvement includes collaborative contributions, communication, resources (Hornby, 2000; Smith, Connel, Wright, Sizer, Norman, Hurley & Walker, 1997), and engagement (Barton et al., 2004). Hornby (2000) further maintains that parents are willing to collaborate with teachers and are able to contribute more to school activities that result in their children making greater progress. Therefore, involvement, which is directed by this study, is clarified as schools' ways of making optimum use of parents as valuable resources for promoting higher academic performance and intellectual development of learners.

1.5.1.5 Communication

Communication refers to openness and contacts through effective channels between schools and parents about the rights and responsibilities of each. Bastiani (cited by Hornby, 2000) and Shah (2001) say that the concept of communication as involvement includes an open door policy in which both parents and school feel comfortable about contacting each other on a continuous basis for assistance and support for learners' optimal learning. Parents have time, ability, skills, knowledge and special talents to act as resources and provide support to a school's curriculum (Barton et al., 2004; Sanders, 2001; Hornby, 2000).

1.5.1.6 Participation

Barton et al. (2004) explains involvement as making parents participate in the education of their children and increasing effective communication, good relations and cooperation between the school and home or parents. Parents and teachers work together to share ideas, skills and resources to improve and increase the effectiveness of children's education (Shah, 2001).

Drawing upon critical theory, participation can be described in terms of critical activities or those things parents do when they carefully examine, constructively question, support and influence practices and policies of schools for the benefit of children's academic education. Barton and Drake (2002) and Barton et al. (2004) claim that this kind of parental involvement challenges the parents when it comes to activities that are prescribed by the policies such as attendance at parent-teacher meetings. This kind of action positions parents as framers of school structures rather than receivers (Civil, Andrade & Anhalt, 2000). This study focuses on parents' active participation in which schools and parents together create and maintain means for parents' involvement in the curriculum and support teachers in their daily task of teaching. Simultaneously, teachers provide either home-based or school-based education to parents in order to empower them for the responsibility of reinforcing school learning.

1.5.1.7 Presence

The presence of parents enables them to observe children and their teachers, mediate problems as they arise, extend their own learning in order to help their children seek help when needed, and keep the entire system in control. This notion has been drawn from Spillane, Diamond, Walker, Halverson and Jita's (2001) explanation of parents' presence. Involvement as a presence means that parents become a part of the fabric of the school. This kind of involvement is what Hornby refers to as '*collaborative working relationships*' as parents and teachers listen to each other, give due

consideration to each other's views, and share control in order to provide the optimum education for children (Hornby, 2000: 20).

1.5.1.8 Relationship

Parental involvement goes beyond parents and their participation in events. It includes ecologies (whole system – parents in relation to their environments) (Barton et al., 2004). The context that surrounds parents' decisions to participate in their children's education, including their productive relationship with other individuals and resources, makes parental involvement a relation process. Productive relationship refers to a respectful, empathetic, genuine, open and honest relationship that values parents' opinions and considers their requests, needs and wishes (Hornby, 2000). Bloom's (1997) understanding of relationship refers to mutually beneficial and an ongoing involvement and shared responsibility between schools and parents that is designed to enhance learners' education (Bloom, 1997). Franklin and Streeter (1995) interpret the concept of relationship as schools and families or parents working together with the aim of developing initiatives that improve learners' learning. Phelps' description of relationship includes "*support, open communication, common goals, compromise and partnership between parents, community and schools*" (Phelps, 1999: 2). I share the same understanding of the concept relationship as the connections, interactions and activities happening between the school and families and as a thrust toward dismantling the disconnections between them to directly or indirectly support and promote the learners' development and growth. Schools and parents should share the responsibility of educating learners together.

1.5.1.9 Co-operation

The idea of co-operation refers to the practice of combined effort, collaboration, unity and teamwork by parents and schools on issues concerning augmenting children's learning and development. Smith et al. (1997) explain cooperation as when home, school and community combine their efforts and agreed to work together to develop initiatives that will improve education for the benefit of children. Haggis (1991) equates cooperation with a close link between school, home and the wider community to provide a solution to potential cultural clashes between school, home and community.

This study focuses on the cooperation, which implies the importance of profitable education. According to the current trends in education, profitable education emphasises a move from individualistic education towards interdependence and mutuality between schools and families. This

shift in thinking about education is supported by an affirmation of values such as cooperation and collaboration. Therefore, policy makers should espouse cooperative education in schools so that teachers and families work together to achieve shared goals of learners' learning and maximise children's academic success.

1.5.1.10 Support

Crowson's and Boyd's definition of support maintains that, "*support is a term long used by educators to describe the responsibilities of parents and of the community if schools are to do their jobs effectively*" (Crowson & Boyd, 1998: 884). Therefore, schools should make sure that procedures are in place to meet parents' needs and to make sure that parents' potential contributions are being fully utilised. It is the schools' responsibility to provide parents with opportunities to receive guidance whenever they need it about their children and the problems, which concern them.

1.5.1.11 Rural

The Population and Housing Census Report A in Namibia (1991) describes rural localities as remote areas/regions excluded from urban classification of the 1981 population census. A rural area is a place where most of the people make a living from pastoral and/or agricultural productions (The Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Wordfinder, 1993). The remote area focused on by this study is a region consisting of many villages where most of the inhabitants make their living from agricultural production, and a few small towns in northern Namibia where modern facilities such as libraries, electricity, running water, television, cellular phone network reception, telephones and post offices are either nonexistent or insufficient.

1.5.1.12 Professional educator

The quantitative results of this study show that all principals and teachers who responded to the questionnaire were professionally trained as teachers. Moreover, the analysis of the quantitative data established internal consistency and similarity between principals' and teachers' responses. Therefore, I found it appropriate to refer to them together as professional educators.

1.5.1.13 Parent

The concept of parent in this study is used as a generic term encompassing biological and/or non-biological parents, guardians and all family members actively involved in a child's learning.

1.5.2 Theoretical framework underpinning the investigation

The theoretical framework of this research is positioned within Namibia's policy for Educational Reform and Development that advances a generative critique of educational process and a growing appreciation of contextualisation and ecological settings (MEC, 1993). The interest in this research is to understand how rural lower primary schools in Namibia involve parents in the academic education of learners.

Critical theory claims that an individual's thoughts and behaviours are the product of society, hence knowledge, skills and values of all stakeholders in children's education should be respected (Leonardo, 2004). Jansen (1998) supports this trend as he argues that critical analysis of educational practice should not exclude indigenous ways of supporting learning of the formal school curriculum.

Research done in some African countries (Heneveld & Craig, 1996) found that parents are only involved as resources going into education, e.g. unskilled labour (such as improving and maintaining schools' physical facilities) and school funds rather than as a mechanism for creating and maintaining partnerships for learners' academic learning. The negative attitude shown by research towards some parents as potential learning resources is a subject to be constructively criticised as follows. According to critical theory, there is no absolute fixed knowledge that people can grasp. It is subject to change by continuous research. Therefore, appreciation and understanding of the learning potential from the multi-directionality of family-school relationships and positive school-parent interdependence is a paradigm that needs to be explored intensively.

The ecological belief that children's learning does not exclude the influence of social interaction is tantamount to accepting that development of children's learning of the formal curriculum becomes absurd if it disregards the home-school interconnected and supportive role. The framework of critical theory in support of ecological theory strongly posits the establishment of strong and beneficial relationships between family members and schools, empowerment of parents, and through these the enhancement of children's learning, achievement and wellbeing.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Delpont (2005), Punch (2005) and Creswell (2003), research design refers to a research structure that shows the different parts of research, how they connect with each other and in what sequence. Moreover, Fouche and De Vos (2005) claim that research methodology indicates the procedure to be followed for data collection and analysis, and reporting of the findings. Therefore, drawing upon the literature reviewed, the design and methodology of this study denotes a decision made about the overall type design to use, sampling, data sources, what data, how data were collected, what structure the data have and how they were analysed.

The design of this study is a Mixed Methodology type operates on two sequentially conducted phases in its overall process: Phase 1 uses quantitative (survey) research and Phase 2 uses qualitative (interview) research strategies for data collection.

1.6.1 Data collection strategies

This study used a variety of data collection strategies including surveys of the perceptions of professional educators, interviews with professional educators and parents, and the review of literature. Multiple sources of data increase the reliability of the findings. Moreover, the data were triangulated across perspectives (theory triangulation) to overcome some of the limitations. Stake (2000) defines triangulation as *“a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation, and clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen”* (Stake, 2000: 443). Evidences from the data and from the literature supported understanding and explanation in argument (Babbie & Mouton, 2002; Janesick, 2000).

1.6.2 Data analysis

The analysis of the entire data of the study is characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data (Phase 1) followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Phase 2).

1.6.2.1 Analysis of Phase 1 data: quantitative study

After the data were collected, they were coded and captured in the Excel program. SAS v8.2 was used for analysis. To start the analysis process with an error-free data, the data file was checked for

errors. Descriptive statistics described the characteristics of the sample. The meaning of the data was sought through frequency analysis. The calculation of total parental involvement per school was done to identify schools for Phase 2 of the study. Six schools were identified for Phase 2.

1.6.2.2 Analysis of Phase 2 data: qualitative study

Qualitative data analysis in this study means transforming, interpreting and making sense of interview data thus depending on ‘analytic induction’ which means that categories, themes and patterns come from the data (Punch, 2005; Janesick, 2000). On the basis of this premise, the analysis process of data at this phase level of the study emerged and was being done concurrently with data collection. Creswell (2003) and Neuman (2003) found out that the simultaneous activities of collecting and analysing data are due to the iterative thinking process of a qualitative researcher.

Although the two activities (data collection and data analysis) were conducted concurrently, the emphasis was greater on collection at first and greater on analysis as the process continued. Operations such as data transcription, coding, identification of themes and developing categories, unfolding and incorporating theory and writing a report (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005) were considered. The procedures followed were reading, coding and memoing. However, I was not rigidly confined to one procedure at a time or to undertaking them in any particular order. Rather, I moved from a reading to a close coding to writing intensive analyses and then back again (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005; Punch, 2005). Punch (2005) and Janesick (2000) argue that there is no single right or best system (way) to do qualitative data analysis. The ultimate decision about data analysis resides with the researcher.

1.6.3 Research population and sampling

This section of the study presents the evidence of parental involvement practice in all lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region, which was sampled from the four northern regions in Namibia. Punch (2005) defends the idea behind sampling as he states that researchers select samples and collect data only from the sample because they (researchers) cannot study the whole population. Punch clearly contends that “no study can include everything: you cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything” (Punch, 2005: 187).

1.6.3.1 Sampling for Phase 1 of the study

There are 764 lower primary schools in rural northern Namibia. The area is divided in four regions. Omusati has 258 lower primary schools, Ohangwena has 205, Oshana has 134 and Oshikoto has 167. Ohangwena Region (with 205 lower primary schools) was found dialectically most amenable, and sufficient to be studied on behalf of all the four regions in rural northern Namibia. At Phase 1 of the study, all lower primary schools (n = 205) in Ohangwena Region were surveyed.

1.6.3.2 Sampling for Phase 2 of the study

After the analysis of the all schools' survey in Phase 1, six schools (two high, two intermediate and two low parental involvement schools) were chosen for in-depth study. For each school, a principal, two lower primary teachers and two parents were interviewed. The total number of interview participants per school was five and from all six schools was 30.

1.7 CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE STUDY

1.7.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues refer to conducting research that benefits participants in positive ways. Piper and Simons (2005: 56) explain an ethical act as "*doing no harm*" to research participants. Ethical issues in this research stems from how I acted toward human subjects, indicates the appropriateness of the methodology for the current research and highlights the moral dilemmas I encountered in this study. Ethical issues considered in this study were:

Informed Consent – the purpose of the research was explained to those interviewed. A cover letter requesting participants' consent (See Appendix A for a consent form for professional educators and parents) and explaining the purpose and value of the study was sent with questionnaires to the principals of all lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region. All participants were notified of how the information they contributed was going to be utilised (Creswell, 2003). Principals were asked to complete one questionnaire and give one copy of a questionnaire to one of the lower primary teachers (grade 1-3) at their schools to complete. It is in the Research's Code of Ethics that participants must agree voluntarily to participate without physical or psychological coercion, and their agreement must be based on full and open information (Christians, 2000). The Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Education had notified the Regional Directors about this study. The Regional Directors had notified school Inspectors (See Appendix B for permission letter from the regional director). School Inspectors had notified schools. School principals and teachers were

asked to sign consent letter to verify their willingness to participate in the study. Parents were asked orally to give their consent for participating in the study. The consent form states clearly that participation was voluntary (see Appendix A: Consent form for professional educators and parents).

Confidentiality and Anonymity – during the data collection process, interviewees were informed of their right not only to talk in confidence, but also to refuse to allow publication of any material that they think might harm them in any way. In the same vein, participants were assured of the protection of privacy and anonymity of individuals in reporting. I tried to remove from the research records any element that might indicate the participants' identities. I changed participants and schools' real names to pseudonyms and letter numbers respectively when reporting data. One dilemma faced when it comes to anonymity was when an interviewee indicated a wish to be acknowledged in the report for his outstanding individual contribution (his own perception) to the operationalisation of the phenomenon under study. For example, during our informal discussion (after the interview) with parent Weyulu of School A, he mentioned that sharing information (by mentioning names) about how parents can contribute to the strategies for encouraging learners to work hard in schools might serve as a good example to other parents. That parent referred to a floating trophy he gave to the school. I explained to that parent that it would be impossible to identify his name because it would reveal the identity of the school and eventually the identity of the principal of that particular school. Interviewees were granted a freedom of choice for their responses to be tape-recorded or not. This served as declaration that those participants' rights were protected.

Accuracy of data transcription was checked and the transcribed data were edited before analysis was done. Falsification of data was avoided by reporting exact findings that emerged from the study. Simple and easy language has been used for writing a report on the findings. The report includes the detailed procedure followed to arrive at the description of the study's findings.

Prepublication access - I wanted to adhere to the principle of respect for persons by giving all participants the opportunity to read a research report before it went public. Prepublication access offers an opportunity for the participants to comment upon and possibly add to the report, and it demonstrates greater respect for potential difference of interpretation and the right to a fair voice (Piper & Simons, 2005). Unfortunately, due to the participants' inability to read and/or write (parents) as well as clearly understand (lower primary teachers and principals) the English language, this was not an easy thing to do. Once analysed, the data are kept for a reasonable period

then will be discarded. The data will not be shared with individuals who have not participated in the study.

1.7.2 Delimitations

The study was restricted to lower primary schools in northern Namibia in one region, Ohangwena. Janesick (2000) suggests for researchers to select sites and develop rationales for the choice of these sites. Based on this suggestion, the Ohangwena Region was purposefully chosen because the language spoken in that region is my Mother Tongue. Therefore, I understand the language spoken in that region very well (Schurink, 2000) and would not have to use interpreters. This fluency and understanding of the language as a researcher afforded me the benefits of clear communication and understanding of the responses of the research participants. Moreover, clear communication ensures accurate understanding, analysis and interpretation of data. An English-based interview would be an impediment to clear communication (Mertens, 2003). *“Becoming immersed in a study requires passion: passion for people, passion for communication, and passion for understanding people”* (Janesick, 2000: 393). Parents can often make other contributions directly related to their children’s education. However, the decision to focus this study on involvement of parents in academic education was because most of parent contributions indicated in the literature seem to neglect mechanisms to bring school and parents together for learners’ academic education. Moreover, little explicit attention is given to involving parents as learning resources people.

1.7.3 Limitations

The study was limited to the professional educators who were either principals of schools with lower primary phases and/or teachers for lower primary grades (Grades 1-3), and parents constrained by geographic boundaries of the school neighbourhood. The study did not include learners’ views due to their level of development. The study focused on the input (practice of parental involvement by schools and support of parents for academic activities) required to produce desired output (increased academic learning and achievement). However, this study did not look at the output, learners’ academic achievement.

The study’s reliance on a questionnaire results alone to identify schools with high, intermediate and low parental involvement could also be a potential limitation of this study. Low return rate of the questionnaire due to participants’ unfamiliarity with the culture of research and negative attitude

towards private research (see Section 5.6 for inspectors' personal observations) limited the collection of broad perspectives.

Finally, this study had to be completed within a settled time limit, which reduced the magnitude of the study. A longitudinal study to do direct observations of involvement would add depth to the study's results.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The report of this study is organised into five chapters. Each of the chapters deals with a specific aspect of the investigation. They are briefly explained below.

Chapter One is the introduction chapter. Its purpose is to give the motivation for the study, present a brief background on which the study is cemented, and clarify the problem that instigated the study. The same chapter also states the research purpose, aim, questions, and objectives. This chapter further introduces the theoretical and conceptual framework that has informed the study. The chapter briefly describes the sampling procedure, limitations of the study, defines basic concepts and clarifies aspects to be considered as part of ethics. The chapter ends by demarcating the remainder of the research report.

Chapter Two presents the main findings, arguments and conclusions of relevant literature reviewed. It mainly deals with the explication of parental involvement and its educational implications. The foundation for this educational approach is also considered. The same chapter concerns itself with the general background of the conceptual and theoretical framework that has informed the phenomenon under study, parental involvement. Indicators as well as challenges and common barriers associated with parental involvement in rural areas are described in this chapter. This chapter concludes with critical analysis of other empirical researchers' findings and presents the silence in the existing knowledge base, which justifies the inquiry.

Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology of this study. The chapter shows how the quantitatively focused research questions of this study were addressed. Sample design, sampling techniques and criteria used in the choice of sample size are explained. Full details of data collection techniques, procedures used for data gathering and analysis as well as settings of data gathering, are all explained in this chapter. It concludes with the summary of main ideas discussed in this section.

Chapter Four discusses the use of qualitative methodology in Phase 2 of this study. The chapter presents the data collected through interviews to investigate the processes and strategies used in the six identified lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region to implement parental involvement in academic education of learners. The findings are interpreted, summarised and presented in descriptive-narrative form.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter that presents the end product of what has been studied. It presents threads of both Phase 1 and Phase 2's main results and findings respectively, shows how the results confirm or deviate from the study's expectations, recommends and offers suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

THE FOUNDATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The review of literature for this study has been done before and during planning, and it is continuing throughout the process. The purpose of reviewing literature on a continuous basis is for the literature to become a fruitful source of input to the whole research process (Punch, 2005). Reviewing literature enables me to gain further insight in the phenomenon under study (parental involvement) (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) and places my study within the conceptual and theoretical context of the general body of scientific knowledge (Punch, 2005). Identification of major relevant constructs and the appropriate measurement instruments of the study were determined by the review of literature (William, 1999). Literature review empowers me to be able to challenge the previously accepted ideas (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Therefore, Chapter 2 of this study presents a critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature on parental involvement in education in order to justify my particular inquiry. The meaning of parental involvement is given and a model that identifies the indicators of parental support based on extensive review of literature is provided. Simultaneously the promising theories that influence a generic notion of parental involvement and the findings of empirical studies on the importance of parental involvement in education related to activities in schools are also presented. The chapter indicates the foundations behind the development of the parental involvement approach and challenges of this practice in rural schools and among rural families, and ends with the explanations of the gap found in the literature to be filled by the results of this study.

To explore the practice of parental involvement in children's education, I reviewed specifically research studies and resources (theoretical and empirical) relating to parental involvement. Some of them are Faughnan, 2005; Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005; Kakli, Kreider & Ross, 2005; Barton et al., 2004; Kantor & Lowe, 2004; Stern, 2003; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; Wright & Stegelin, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Epstein, 2002; Sanders, 2002; Cooper & Gandara, 2001; Lindsay, 2001; Holmes, 1998; Heneveld & Craig, 1996.

The purpose is to uncover what research says about the importance of parental involvement, how to implement effective parental involvement practices, how schools can involve the low-income population of parents, common barriers associated with parental involvement especially in rural schools, and what schools can do in general to overcome those challenges. In this literature, parental involvement is multi-dimensional, ranging from parents directly helping with homework to parents establishing high expectations for their children's learning in schools. The literature reviewed includes sources on quantitative and qualitative research designs (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005; Punch, 2005; De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2005; Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

2.2 EXPOSITION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement is an integrative kind of thinking and approach to school improvement now emerging from education systems especially with respect to learners' learning. Its rationale is rooted in the belief that in order for schools to educate all youth effectively, parents and families should become fully involved in the process of educating learners (Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Fullan, 1998; MEC, 1993). Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) and MEC (1993) view parental involvement as an important way to improve the quality of education, and the way to facilitate access to progression within education.

Kantor and Lowe (2004: 6) define quality education as "*a strong academic curriculum taught by engaged, engaging (sic) and well-educated teachers in schools committed to the promotion of intellectual development*". However, Kaplinski (1992) and Rothstein (2005) argue that no matter how qualified, competent and professional teachers are, how good the curriculum and how caring the school may be, families still carry the major responsibility in contributing to their children's education.

Currently, education policies articulate the realisation of what education systems cannot possibly achieve if schools alone are seen as responsible for learners' learning. Policies in education stimulate new field-level thinking about what it takes to educate children for the 21st century. 'It takes a village to educate a child' (Brown, 2001). In practice the notion of this African proverb means bringing together all complementary learning supports, including family support and family involvement, to promote children's learning and contribute to their school success. The concept of complementary learning supports forms a framework for aligning multiple resources and building on their strengths for a more effective way to improve children's learning (Rothstein, 2005). In

addition, Kakli, Kreider and Ross (2005), Maynard and Howley (1997) and Olsen et al. (1994) identify important statements about parental involvement. They purport that parents have a right to democratic participation in their children's school, successful schools have parents who are involved, successful learners in schools have parents who are involved, and schooling improves when a variety of adults share their talents and model successful strategies of life management.

Education of children is a joint endeavour between home and school. Parents' involvement strengthens this bond of partnership (Faughnan, 2005; Kaplinski, 1992). Parental involvement is seen as a productive relationship between home and the educational setting in which the practitioners are responsible for involving parents in the work that they do for educational reasons. It should rather be regarded as a meaningful, respectful and authentic relationship schools and families co-constructed with genuine enthusiasm, and implies responsibility, sharing and balance of power over educational activities between parents and school to prevent practitioners from considering their own value positions and those embodied by the curriculum they are operating. Edwards and Knight (1994: 111) accede and thus reason that the importance of this relationship should not be simplified and "*seen as a bridge for the child between home and school in order to ease the transition into schools*". Therefore, parental involvement should not be used as a system to release teachers from mundane work, or as a grudging obedience to policies (Stern, 2003). It rather should serve as the best means schools can use to convey a sense of parental rights and responsibilities within the school to parents and establish a set of expectations of parents as partners.

The philosophy of educational reform purports that improvement in public education happens only when there is improvement in society (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999), because schools are part of society. Educational reform suggests that teachers need to draw on the outside world, including the world of learners' families, tapping into knowledge and skills of parents. Stern (2003: 37) further argues that

"the teaching profession should be an ecological profession, connected to what is happening locally, nationally and globally. Parents are really part of those contexts, and their knowledge and understanding of, and interest in local, national and global issues must be made use of in classrooms."

These ideas imply that parents and teachers might be equal partners in the education of young children.

2.3 CRITICAL AND ECO-SYSTEMIC THEORIES AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A generic notion of parental involvement is influenced by critical theory. Critical theory claims that our thoughts and behaviours are the product of society. According to Higgs and Smith (2002:86) “...*the first society we know is the family, and a little later, the school.*” Smith et al. (1997) argue that families do not exist out of context not in a vacuum, but interact with their surroundings, i.e. within the community. Therefore, an ecological approach to parental involvement provides a conceptual framework that acknowledges that families and schools are embedded in communities.

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child must be what the society wants for all of its children. Concurring with this notion, Stein and Thorkildsen (1999) contend that improvements in public education can happen only when there are improvements in society. This indicates how the child’s world is viewed as a series of nested structures. Therefore, the framework of this study draws upon ecological theory that regards both family and school as valuable contributors to children’s learning, both at home and at school. This study’s framework also draws upon critical theory’s criticism of traditional parental involvement, which claims that schools tend to maintain the ideals and beliefs of a capitalist culture, positioning the space (activities), capital (knowledge), resources and cultures of poor families as subordinate (Creswell, 2003; Villenas & Dehyle, 1999). The capitalist culture has a long-held assumption about parental involvement that parents especially from rural contexts and poor backgrounds lack the knowledge, skills, and network of resources to know how to enter into the kinds of conversations and activities that make a difference in educational development of their children (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Hammond, 2001; Villenas & Dehyle, 1999). Such beliefs are positioned as central processes in inhibiting quality education especially to children among parents with poor socio-economic status. Nevertheless, the critical or liberatory education theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) encourages intellectual engagement with such form of oppressive belief. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) affirm that a critical social theory is concerned with reformation, issues of justice, and the ways the matters of class, ideologies, education and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system. This study is compatible with Critical Theory because it partly aims at generating knowledge that breaks down the constructed belief that emanates from political domains and reproduces oppressive ideologies (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004) in this study’s context that parental involvement is difficult to practice in rural contexts.

The critical educational paradigm claims that positivist and interpretive paradigms present incomplete accounts of social behaviour as they neglect the political and ideological contexts of much educational research. Critical theorists would argue that positivists and interpretivists are technicians who seek to understand and accept existing research knowledge rather than question the interest and legitimacy of the knowledge. It is the critical theorists' caution against produced and general accepted knowledge to be handled with care because, they (critical theorists) reason that knowledge can have the agenda of keeping the empowered in their empowered position and the disempowered in their powerless positions, meaning reinforcing and perpetuating the status quo (Leonardo, 2004).

In this enterprise, critical theory identifies the 'false' or 'fragmented' consciousness that has brought an individual or a social group to relative powerlessness, and it questions the legitimacy of this. Critical theory argues that much behaviour/research knowledge is the outcome of particular illegitimate, dominators and repressive factors (Freire in Leonardo, 2004). Hence, critical theory seeks to uncover the interests at work in particular situations and to interrogate the legitimacy of those interests – identifying the extent to which they are legitimate in their service of equality and democracy (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

Through ideology critique methodology, this study intended to uncover the vested interests in accepted and generalised knowledge that parental involvement is difficult to implement in rural schools. Through ideology critique, the study would reveal to rural schools that compatible processes and activities schools can perpetuate and keep themselves empowered in working with parents for learners' academic learning. Ideology critique hoped to reveal situations, which might be other than those taken for granted as natural (Leonardo, 2004; Creswell, 1998). The claimed situations in rural schools are not natural, but they are the outcomes or processes wherein interests and powers are protected (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000), and one task of ideology critique methodology in the current study was to expose this. Rural schools need to become aware of how the assumptions of existing research orientations might be ideological distortions that, in their effects, are perpetuating a social situation that works against teachers and parents democratic empowerment (Creswell, 1998).

Although the end goal of this study might be the desire to comprehend the underlying orders of social life, its design intended to change how people think, encourage professionals in schools and parents to interact and form networks for the benefit of effective education of learners, and help teachers and parents to examine the conditions of their existence.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1986) the eco-system theory emphasises the meaning of each factor contributing to human learning and development. Therefore, factors such as process, person, context, and time are the main concern of eco-systemic perspective. The following paragraphs explain the three mentioned factors:

Process refers to mechanisms of human development, which in this study's context include parent support for learners' learning. The need to consider mechanisms for the learning process and the learning environment was based on Halverson's (2001) argument that not inquiring into the process may result in loss of valuable information. Through the eco-systemic perspective, a person is inseparable from his/her environment and the environment can explain his/her behaviour. Time refers to the historical period of learning and development. Context means the environment that influences learners' learning and development (Halverson, 2001). According to the eco-systemic perspective, context has the most important meaning for development and it includes four levels of structural environment: micro-system, meso-system, exo-system and macro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

The micro-system is a face-to-face/ classroom and/or family setting in which the learner experience a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations. The meso-system is a relationship between the parents and teachers. The exo-system is a linkage between parents and/or their working place and the community. The macro-system is the linkage between the community (in which parents, teachers and learners are consisted) and its value systems. The context factor of the eco-system was dealt with most in this study. Therefore, the eco-systemic perspective influenced this research. Moreover, examining environmentally related issues with Bronfenbrenner's level systems facilitated the development of systemic ideas about processes of parental involvement, which encourage learners' learning.

Researchers have revisited the perceived deficits in the home environment based on a set of assumptions about the supremacy of middle-class attitudes and values. The critical and postmodernism theories claim that there is no absolute knowledge that people can grasp. It is the interpretive constructivists' stance that no one perspective is any truer than any other perspective (Mertens, 2003). All people experiences are opinions and according to the interpretivists, all theory is revisable (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). The critical and postmodernism theories encourage human beings to become free of all forms of oppressive ideas. Hence, this study challenges other researchers' findings, which conclude that parental involvement is difficult to

implement in rural schools and its practices are more likely to take root in schools that serve urban populations than in schools that serve rural and low-income populations. Creswell (2003) presents a view that conventional studies have suppressed members of oppressed and marginalised groups. In addition, this oppression remains if disadvantaged people accept their social status as natural, inevitable and inviolable. Moreover, the literature reviewed indicates that the social scientists from developed countries view African origin families as pathological and incapable of preparing their children for school. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) argue that privileged groups often express ideological hegemony that cannot be separated from the production of ideology that produce consent to the status quo and individuals' particular places within it.

The privileged groups' view is against the transformative emancipatory paradigm in general and the Freirian approach in particular. The Freirian approach is characterised by an educational philosophy of pedagogy for progressive and democratic schools. People's education and pedagogy of democracy include aspirations, knowledge, skills and values of all stakeholders (irrespective of race, social class, gender, etc.) in which all parents from all different backgrounds are covered (Freire, 1993; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999; Higgs & Smith, 2002). Therefore, Jansen's (1998:132) thinking is in line with the liberation argument as he reasons that: "*The critical analysis of education practice is one of the strands in the critical theory and should incorporate indigenous ways of supporting learning the formal school curriculum.*" The liberation argument of critical theory is based on the belief that the way we think, reason and argue comes from our social contexts (Higgs & Smith, 2002).

According to the reviewed literature, it is the assumption of ecological theory that one's own personal experiences, along with those of one's neighbours, contribute to perceptions of education and opportunity (Smith et al., 1997). This assumption implies that together the members of neighbourhood (i.e. families and teachers) form a collection of people encouraging educational endeavours. Hence, critical, postmodernism and ecological theories value the importance of involving parents and abilities of all parents to contribute towards learners' education. Schools as venues of hope could become sites of resistance to the oppressive ideas by working within a liberatory pedagogical framework and create democratic possibilities of involvement for all stakeholders in education of children. These theories (Critical, Postmodernism, Ecological and Eco-systemic) share the same view that parents bring many meanings, which need to be assimilated into school curriculum (Higgs & Smith, 2002).

Learning cannot occur in a vacuum state. Rather, it does always in its context. Therefore, it was found necessary to study the contextual mechanism (i.e. support of parents) that nurtures learners' learning. The role of parents or how schools facilitate parental involvement at the micro-system, meso-system and exo-system level would be the most basic context of children's learning because, they are the nearest and the most familiar environments to them. If schools allow and facilitate involvement of parents at the aforementioned levels, it would influence children's academic learning and achievement. In order to understand what the focus of this study had been, the following paragraphs present the conceptualisation of parental involvement.

According to Punch (2005) a conceptual framework shows the conceptual status of the factors and variables or phenomenon researchers usually study in a diagram or narrative form. The phenomenon under this study is parental involvement in academic education of learners. Therefore, this study intends to (a) investigate whether and, if so, how, the processes used to involve parents in learners' academic education and growth and (b) understand and identify the activities and processes of parental involvement in learners' academic education and growth that are contextually appropriate and compatible with rural conditions in Namibia' lower primary schools. The quest for understanding how parental involvement is practiced in rural contexts was enhanced by a comprehensive review of research study findings on the implementation of parental involvement in schools to support children's education done in other African countries as well as other countries outside Africa. Although the literature presents compelling evidence of positive correlation between family/parent involvement in education and increase in learners' learning and achievement, it also further indicates a strong relationship between poor involvement and parents' socio-economic background. There is no indication of whether attempts were made to find out how parental involvement can be improved and sustained in relation to the rural contexts. Information on how to ensure the practice of parental involvement that specifically improves and promotes learning in academic subjects in rural schools is frequently lacking.

The focus of this study is based on an argument proposed by Heller, Holtzman, and Messick (1982) in Harry, Sturges & Klingner, (2005), who argue that an understanding of the issue must be based on a thorough analysis of the process through which the phenomenon occur, because inappropriate practice casts doubt on the validity of the outcomes (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005). In accordance, Wright and Steglin (2003), Maynard and Howley (1997) and Anderson et al. (1994) feel that contexts are unique. Therefore appropriate practices of parental involvement are context bound. Maynard and Howley further stress that approaches used to study parental involvement processes that produced negative results in rural areas by other researchers were not done with rural

contexts in mind. Against this background, I have a sincere desire, and am curious to explore and critically analyse the issue of parental involvement for supporting learners' academic education in one region of the northern Namibia. The concept, academic education, could be understood as parents and teachers scholastic support for learners aimed at enhancing learners' understanding of school curriculum and instruction and consequently boosting their performance (Barton et al., 2004; Hornby, 2000). Ecological theorists believe that parents have time, ability, skills, knowledge and special talents to act as resources and provide support to schools' curriculum. (Sanders, 2001; Hornby, 2000; Smith et al., 1997). Therefore, involvement focused by this study should be clarified as rural lower primary schools' ways of making optimum use of parents as valuable resources for promoting academic performance of learners.

The conceptual framework of this study makes the understanding that I am using in my thinking about explicit involvement (see Table 2.1). My understanding of involvement is based on ecological theory's belief that the child's world is an interrelatedness of a series of nested environmental systems or resources, such as families, schools, churches, peers, governments and the broader culture, to mention a few, which influence each other and within which a child learns and develops (Barton et al., 2004). Therefore, series of nested structures are regarded as valuable contributors to children's learning. In many ecological studies (Epstein et al., 2002; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Hornby, 2000; Smith et al., 1997) factors such as parents, family and schools' attitudes, schools practices and school climate are all regarded as ecological contributors to involvement. These involvement factors result in children's higher educational aspirations, greater perceived competencies and evidence of higher academic achievement.

Wright and Stegelin (2003) honour more than one resource from which children learn and with respect to the linkages between these resources, this theoretical orientation reflects a complementary-learning approach. I concur with Wright and Stegelin (2003) as I conceptualise involvement as the issue that is influenced by social ecology and ecological systems theory. The ecological systems theory serves as an appropriate framework to position, justify and support this study on home-school relationship (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005).

2.4 CULTURAL CAPITAL: A DETERMINANT OF INVOLVEMENT

Research findings reviewed reveal that the impact of parental involvement on learners' academic performance overall is significant among children from all demographic backgrounds and income groups (Grenfell & James 1998), because parents across social classes highly value education.

However, some studies suggest that parental involvement has more beneficial effects among learners from families of high socio-economic status than learners from families of low socio-economic status. Lee and Bowen (2006) reason that, the cultural capital, which is possessed by high socio-economic parents magnifies the effects of their involvement in children's academic performance at school. Cultural capital involves a collection of individual cultural dispositions and makes them procuring additional capital that benefits their family members in the education system. In the context of parental involvement, cultural capital of parents in terms of their children's education represents the power to promote their children's academic enhancement (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

While I acknowledge the theory that states that moderated habitus of low socio-economic parents results in their less cultural capital and thus in attenuated involvement (Bourdieu's theory in Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lareau, 2001). I lend support to other researchers who claim that parents across different social classes have unique capital and thus highly value education of their children. Cultural factors have great impact on effective involvement. Therefore, cultural understanding and knowledge of a specific demographic background of the people to be studied should be seriously taken into consideration for better understanding of parental involvement in different contexts. This argument implies that rural parents may still be actively involved in one way or another in supporting school activities congruent with values and practices according to their contexts. Grenfell and James (1998) assert that parents from poor backgrounds need to make more extensive efforts to ensure their children's academic success.

Therefore, studies such as this one, that lead to greater understanding of the multiple types of involvement, which are congruent with lower primary schools situated in low demographic environments may contribute to rural lower primary schools' knowledge about how to use parent involvement efforts to increase the learners' academic performance.

2.5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IN THE PARENT-SCHOOL SYSTEM

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Model of Contextual Influences on Children's Development, there are two central aspects of the meso-system: (1) connections among the adults in children's primary micro-systems (home and school), which are promoted when parents are

involved at school, and (2) congruence in behaviours, values, and attitudes across settings, which is conveyed when parents are supporting their children's education.

The description (Coleman, 1988) and application (Lareau, 2001) of concepts of social and cultural capital to the home-school meso-system helps to justify the contentions of the current study. The study's contention is that schools situated in low economic environments would exhibit unique types of parental involvement practice to enhance learners' academic performance. Therefore, rural schools' willingness to involve parents and rural parents' unique types of capital enable schools to involve parents in their children's academic education in their own way. Parents with low-income background may display different types of involvement due to unique cultures, contexts, financial resources, educational knowledge and experience.

Lareau (2001) presents Bourdieu's concept of social capital as actively maintained social relationships or networks that provide access to resources. However, Bourdieu finds inequality in the amounts of capital individuals (in this case, are parents) obtain from social networks due to the fit between their culture and the culture of the institution (school) (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Parents' cultural disposition or 'habits', which according to Brubaker (2004) and Lee and Bowen (2006) means individual characteristics that results from past experience of school makes them act and grasp experience in a certain way which either moderates or increases their involvement. For example, when parents' disposition is consistent with the field (school values and practice) and when the school culture is familiar to and understood by them, they are able to enjoy social advantage and thus obtain capital (Brubaker, 2004; Coleman, 1988). Therefore, social capital is a means by which parents can promote their children's school achievement and educational attainment through

- Visits to the school
- Interactions with other parents at school
- Attending parents meetings
- Providing attention to their children
- Engaging in volunteer activities
- Providing help with homework
- Discussing the child's schoolwork and experiences at school (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Brubaker, 2004; Lareau, 2001).

2.6 FOUNDATIONS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The theoretical assumptions that comprise the foundation of parental involvement should be pursued under the banner of three major premises (Wright & Stegelin, 2003; Stern, 2003):

- The doctrine of parents' rights – parents have the right and responsibility to determine what is right in the best interest of their children ,
- The family influences on the child – the family is the child's first and most important educator. Family members know their children better than anyone else and therefore are the primary influences in their children's lives, and
- The democratic process – building relationships with families is part of a concerted effort to provide democratic and equal opportunities to all stakeholders in reaching their common goal which is to nurture and guide children to adulthood.

These premises constitute the foundation for providing accessibility, quality and equality of learning opportunities for all children of all races and social classes.

Moreover, the literature on parental involvement indicates that an appreciation and understanding of the learning potential in positive school-parent interdependence can be attributed to various causes such as:

- The school's realisation that the long-standing fragmentation of services between themselves and parents has damaged their effectiveness. If schools involve parents, children may experience advantages emotionally, cognitively and socially. Therefore, schools feel a need to encourage links with the families of children they teach.
- Parents and families' fight for the re-establishment of grassroots respect and power over their children's education.
- The thirst for an understanding of social influences on child development and a simplified view of the working-class environment as contexts, that were deficient and less effective in preparation of children for academic success.
- The attempts to address the perceived deficits in the home environment rested on a set of assumptions about the supremacy of middle-class attitudes and values

(Rothstein, 2005; Stern, 2003; Sanders, 2001; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999; Waddock, 1995; Edwards & Knight, 1994; MEC, 1993)

Furthermore, the literature indicates that parental involvement started as an attempt to reverse the disconnections between schools, parents and family members in cooperation for supporting learner's education. Edwards and Knight's (1994) research indicates that in the 1980s there was an assumption that parents and educational practitioners are equal in the education of young children. This assumption made professionals feel that their status was undermined. As a reaction, parents decided to fight for their rights (Holmes, 1998). In addition, parental involvement can be attributed to the realisation of democracy in educational systems. This shift is based upon a belief that the schools' efforts to involve parents in supporting their children's education has a tremendous impact on children's attitude toward school, personal growth, and academic success (Epstein, 1995).

Parental involvement in learners' academic education can be seen from pedagogical, political and economic perspectives. From the pedagogical perspective, low achievement rate, especially among poor and marginalised children, has led educators to become more aware of the importance of parental involvement for learners' quality learning in the education process. From the political perspective, the spread of democratic systems of government in countries has sparked a dialogue about and policies to promote equal educational opportunities, and parental participation in children's education (Sanders & Epstein, 1998). Economists argue that education is too important and too all encompassing to be left only to government, school or parents. No organisation can do it by itself and complete this heavy undertaking without the support of other organisations. This means that neither state nor school alone can provide sufficient resources and support needed for learners to succeed in the larger society and to be competent citizens in the twenty-first century (Sanders, 2001; Waddock, 1995). The government, through schools, needs additional resources (parent collaboration) to successfully and effectively support children's education (Shore, 1994; Toffler & Toffler, 1995).

Critical theorists (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: 283) claim that "*we are all empowered and we are all unempowered, in that we all possess abilities and we are all limited in the attempt to use our abilities*". Therefore, what the critical theorists are concerned with is establishment of democracy and empowerment of marginalised people. The political stance based on empowerment and capacity building regard parental involvement as an opportunity for a more democratic and participatory approach to school functioning that can revitalise and assist families, enhance learners' learning, achievement and well-being, and build stronger schools (Epstein et al., 2002). Parent representatives in school decision councils will make dramatic improvements in the school programs and lead to all kinds of social and economic advance (Sanders & Epstein, 1998). Critical theorists indulge themselves in the correction of ideologies that discourage marginalised

communities from engaging in the decisions that crucially affect theirs – and their children’s lives. From the pedagogical stance, if teachers and parents collaborate on curriculum related issues, it makes them communicate more easily and frequently, and provides opportunities to know understand and value each other better. Negative attitudes that teachers and families hold about each other becomes more positive (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999; Sanders & Epstein, 1998). A central principle of the pedagogical stance is educational changes promise of improving learners learning, academic success, achievement and growth, attitude towards school and school attendance, self-image and social well-being (Hollzman, 1995; McKennan & Williams, 1998; Cooper & Gandara, 2001).

2.7 IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) allude that educational policy designers view community participation as a panacea for whatever is going wrong or missing in educational delivery. Parents, as part of community, send their children to schools with the expectation that they will get quality education. However, it is a common fact that throughout the world, schools endeavour to improve quality of education. Quality education is guaranteed if the endeavour becomes a shared responsibility through interaction between and among schools, families and the whole community (Shah, 2001; Hornby, 2000; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; Epstein et al., 2002). Epstein et al. (2002) debate that, if schools care about children, then they should also care about families. Caring about children is a joint venture between schools and families. If teachers view their learners as children, this means they accept the responsibility of sharing education of children with parents. Teachers cannot do their work without the support of families. Moreover, families need to know what is happening in schools in order to support schools. Epstein refers to this joint venture as “*overlapping spheres of influence*” (Epstein, 2002: 9).

Parent participation in the education of children is important in all communities, including low-income communities wherever parents feel a sense of exclusion, low self-esteem and/or hopelessness due to the attitudes of educators. Teachers should regard parents as a source of support for their work. After all, Stern (2003: 3) clarifies that involving parents is “*involving the people who have the responsibility and duty that teachers borrow.*” Morrow (1995) and Olsen et al. (1994) concur as they argue that parents know their children’s strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, parents are the child’s first and most important educators. Hornby (2000) affirms that the fact that parent involvement improves learners’ learning and performance is beyond dispute. Stein and Thorkildsen (1999) cite an unknown source who claims that teachers cannot really be child centred

unless they are family centred. In view of these arguments I concur with Edwards and Knight (1994), who caution professionals against the disrespect of this type of educational approach and admonish that parental involvement not to be made “*a vehicle for undermining the value systems of some social groups through implicit criticism of what these groups hold dear, whether dialect or craft skills*” (Edwards & Knight, 1994: 112). This warning supports a new understanding of social influences on child development and learners’ performance in schools, while refuting a simplified view of working-class environments as contexts that are deficient and less effective in the preparation of children for academic success (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999). The understanding of social influence implies that the learners’ background is considered to be a crucial factor that influences their performance, and the community, which comprises families, constitutes part of this background.

Parents are the first and most important models and teachers of their children (Morrow, 1995). They are the most stable and continuous force in the lives of children, and their involvement in schools provide a means for children to experience a continuous flow through the day, week, and year (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999). Children remain the central focus of parental involvement. Therefore, as an approach it aims to improve education in schools for children’s better learning. Parental involvement serves as one of the effective mechanisms for promoting personal and empowering experiences for the parents by involving them in decision-making bodies, classrooms, parent orientation activities and home activities with their children (Wright & Stegelin, 2003). The more the parents are involved, the more understanding and knowledgeable they become of the school programme and of the teachers’ role. Nevertheless, parental involvement’s main purpose at the school level is more to act as - and mobilise resources and support from all available sources to contribute and improve learners’ learning academic and performance and achievement (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999).

Parental involvement is a developmental process, which runs from parents as clients to parents as collaborators, and “*if the development of parents is an aim, it is desired with the educational needs of the child in mind*” (Edwards & Knight, 1994: 111). Singh, Mbokodi and Msila reason that, without collaborations between schools and communities, the rhetoric in schools about respect for cultural traditions in schools will be empty. In addition, learners will be marginalised by insensitive curricula, foreign to their traditions (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). Moreover, school activities, which involve parents, make it more pleasant, productive, and secure for learners. Parents feel their varied expertise is recognised and used. They develop positive attitudes towards teachers and their teaching, and develop strong confidence in the school (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999; Stern, 2003).

Parental presence and active participation in school activities enriches the curriculum and sends a strong message to the learners about the importance of schooling, safety, and punctuality. It creates an atmosphere of trust and co-operation, children become clearer about what is expected of them, develop higher aspirations, become more excited about learning and do better academic work (Sanders, 1996, November). Involvement improves parents' self-confidence and home support for education; increases parent-child interactions; and strengthens the relationship between school personnel and families (Wright & Stegelin, 2003; Maynard & Howley, 1997).

2.8 INDICATORS OF THE PRACTICE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Namibia's generic policy for Educational Reform and Development (Towards Education for All) provides a conceptual framework that promotes and presents an ecological approach to parental involvement. This policy emphasises the need of the multi-directionality of family, school and community relationships in support of the learners' learning.

In many ecological studies (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Hornby, 2000; Smith et al., 1997; Heneveld & Craig, 1996), the multi-directionality relationship is highlighted by family, teacher and school factors (approaches) and indicators (strategies) as the basic ways of congenial involvement. These factors influence learners' academic learning and partially determine the quality of primary education. The explanations about home and school approaches to parental involvement are as follows:

- Linking families to community resources: Schools can establish linkages between families and community resources for health care, child care, basic needs (clothing and nutrition) learning preparedness and academic assistance to free and empower the families to focus more on their efforts of education-related activities. Schools should make sure that arrangements of these services are in place because health disparities influence children's academic learning. Children who are in discomfort pay less attention than children who are not in discomfort. Children stay away from school and they do not learn if they are distracted by health problems, unsuitable clothing or malnutrition problems. Schools' attempts to link parents with resources in the community can be helpful in meeting needs within the families that might impede the healthy development of children and ensure that children are protected from these problems and stay on track in schools (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Heneveld & Craig, 1996).

- Parents provide financial and/ or material support: Parental involvement can be used as a resource to help supplement the government- restricted budgets (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; Epstein et al., 2002; Heneveld & Craig, 1996; Kaplinski, 1992).
- Some staff members are made leaders in parental involvement: This refers to the school's system of having a teacher (or teachers), within the school that has the time, knowledge, skills and abilities to serve as the school's family broker and facilitates open, effective, frequent and multiple communication (oral and written) between school staff and parents.
- The use of various communication options: The use of frequent and multiple communication types with parents provides them with a wider choice of how to reach out to schools and teachers, makes parents feel comfortable with schools, gives parents a sense of efficacy and influence parents' perceptions of their children as learners (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Heneveld & Craig, 1996). The types of communication schools can use are oral- (such as telephone calls and face to face) and written communications (such as written notes and home – school diaries).
- Parents assist with classroom activities: Asking parents to participate as aides, assisting in the classrooms and in preparation of teaching- learning materials makes parents feel more positive toward the teacher and the school. The unfamiliar school culture becomes more familiar and the students' learning is enhanced by tapping into the knowledge and skills of parents and exploiting what parents are good at in curriculum areas (Stern, 2003; Heneveld & Craig, 1996). This approach also helps parents acquire knowledge, which is helpful to their understanding of their own children (Hornby, 2000). Parents get a sense of why there is a need to communicate the importance of doing well in school to their children.
- Parents involved in school policy formulation and school governance: Families should always be engaged in decision-making and policy formulations with respect to their children's care and education (Epstein et al., 2002; Heneveld & Craig, 1996). These researchers further affirm that policy- related information should be made available to parents.

- Parents' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes: Parents with positive perception of their own competency to foster academic success for their children, and their positive perception of teachers, school and education overall, are more likely to be involved. Parental beliefs in the value of education, overall, are associated with positive beliefs in the value of parental involvement in their child's schooling. Parents' positive perception is also indicated by parents' willingness to get involved in Parent-Teacher Organisations and getting involved in learners' discipline at school, not just in a power struggle between conflicting ideas (Wright & Stegelin, 2003). Teachers in schools should respect and value parents' contributions of any kind, establish free interaction between them and parents, and listen to parents' requests and critical comments about school functioning. According to Lee and Bowen (2006) and Warren (2005), these foster mutual trust and meaningful collaboration between schools, parents and other community members.
- Good relationships between the school and parents: Learning resources need to connect through deliberate and targeted strategies that focus on shared functions or common goals. This means finding meaningful ways for more learning resources such as school and families to connect so they work toward the same or complementary ends, ultimately improving one another's effectiveness (Weiss, 2005; Sigh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999; Heneveld & Craig, 1996).
- Provision of educational and knowledge development opportunities: Schools should arrange knowledge development opportunities (such as parent education workshops (Hornby, 2000)) which might improve parents' ability and effectiveness to lead academic related activities, enrich the curriculum and maximise learning. Parents become aware that they are accountable to their children's education (Heneveld & Craig, 1996). Teachers should continually invite parents to contribute their expertise such as, sharing ideas in workshops and meetings, so that their abilities can be used to the fullest extent (Epstein et al., 2002; Shah, 2001). Since parent training might actually undermine parental participation, as parents may feel that the school perceives them as incompetent. There is a suggestion for a broader based ecological emphasis on consultation, which Sheridan (as cited in Smith et al., 1997) refers to as a conjoint model of consultation (Smith et al., 1997). This is a model in which parents and teachers become engaged in a collaborative process of active communication, joint problem solving, mutual support and recognition of overlapping roles (Smith et al., 1997). Ecological theory regards parent attitudes as a salient factor in parent

involvement. Therefore, programmes that provide parents with information about the importance of involvement and its impact on levels of achievement may be helpful.

- Consultation with teacher training programmes: Teachers whose training included information on parental involvement integrate practices to promote parental involvement and thus report partnerships that are more effective. Hence, consultations with those involved in teacher pre-service and in-service training should be done. Through consultations, teacher training programmes are advised to: provide teachers with more effective ways of communicating with parents and families; advise schools on involvement methods that are not too burdensome on teachers and parents; support teachers on developing home learning activities that foster parent involvement; and help teachers develop open views toward involving parents and interacting with people from diverse backgrounds.

Training and support based on these aims could help tool teachers for the task of improving parent involvement in schools.

- Positive school climate and leadership: Based upon a literature review (Smith et al, 1997; Hornby, 2000), positive school climates predict more positive attitudes toward involvement, more parent-reported opportunities for involvement from teachers, and fewer barriers to involvement in both home and school settings. Positive school climate is also associated with positive perceptions and proactive teacher efforts and strategies to encourage home-school partnership. Traits of positive school climate that can have positive impact on family involvement are safety, cleanliness, rewards, conducive learning atmosphere, range of activities offered, friendly and welcoming reception of visitors, and responsive leadership to parents' needs. (Smith et al., 1997).
- Critical but constructive questioning into school activities: Parental involvement in schools in some cases may cause conflicts between schools and parents. In these schools parents actually disagree with a school's practices and the vision from which they are derived. According to WCER (1995) this conflict may be necessary for the schools' health and vitality. It is a critical theory's stance that parents should critically but constructively question and influence schools' practices and policies for the benefit of children's academic education (Barton et al., 2004; Barton & Drake, 2002).

- Demographic information: Research suggests that background factors such as family income, parental education level, family structure (two-parent, stepparent, single parent, other), and education of teachers in relation to involvement, etc. are for the most part, indirectly related to parental involvement.

For the better understanding of parental involvement concept, Table 2.1 portrays the model of the approaches (Hornby, 2000) or factors (Heneveld & Craig, 1996) and indicators or strategies providing empirical representations of parents’ involvement in education of their children

TABLE 2.1: Model of the factors and their indicators describing parental

involvement (Adapted from Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Shah, 2001, Hornby, 2000; Smith et al., 1997; Heneveld & Craig, 1996)

Factors	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking families to community resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are provided with opportunities for making them understand the importance of giving their children healthy food, appropriate clothes and protection from diseases. • Schools provide parents with information about parenting courses furnished by adult education centres • Schools refer parents for supportive counselling and the relevant services (e.g. social workers) within the community and outside the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents provide financial and/or material support 	Parents’ contributions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant monetary or in-kind (e.g. classroom building materials, food for teachers and learners, teaching aids) contributions beyond fees prescribed by government are evident • Significant labour for site preparation, building construction, and building materials and building maintenance is evident



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools invite parents to talk about their expectations, needs and possible contributions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open and frequent communication between school staff and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools use a range of communication options (informal contacts, home visits, home-school diaries, parent-teacher meetings, telephone contacts, written notes, face-to-face talk) between teachers and parents• The principal and teachers visit learners' homes to facilitate home-school communication• Schools organise face-to-face discussions with parents about the level of their involvement at home so that parents are not pressured into commitments they cannot do or have time to do• Schools use individual parent-teacher meetings and/or visit homes to gather valuable information about learners' conditions and backgrounds (such as special needs, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes (emotional, physical, intellectual etc.), relevant medical details and conditions, and family circumstances)• Schools use newsletters, handbooks and letters specifically aimed at parents to invite and/or inform them of the meetings• School-public events and parent-teacher meetings and conferences are frequent and of high quality



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents assist with classroom activities /participate in academic learning related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers ask parents to assist in teaching (as voluntary teacher aides) any curriculum area in which they have a special talent (e.g. culturally-specific knowledge)• Parents are made to support the idea of homework by cultivating the daily habit of having a time to do homework with children, and monitor it. This is done by the school organising a yearly homework meeting with parents as part of an annual review of homework policy• Schools ask parents to support teachers in preparation of teaching aids and classroom learning materials• Teachers invite parents to their classrooms to observe teaching in progress. In this way, parents serve as an audience for learners academic work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents involved in school policy formulation and school governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-school board member parents are involved in the formulation of school policy by seeking feedback on school policy from all parents• School policies clearly specify parents' rights and responsibilities• School policies are distributed to all parents for information and implementation• The role, functions, and authority of the school board are agreed-upon• The school board meets frequently and makes meaningful decisions related to classroom instruction and teachers' appointments



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of educational and knowledge development opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools organise and provide knowledge development opportunities such as literacy programmes for parents, and workshops about the importance of involvement and its impact on learners' achievement. Various activities (e.g. teacher-parents information sharing seminars, symposiums, parents as invited speakers, learners' work exhibitions) are used to attract parents to the school• Schools organise workshops for parents in which they are guided on how they should help their children to read at home• Schools organise parent workshops and group counselling opportunities for parents of children with reading difficulties, behaviour problems, parents whose children dropped from school, and for parents to see education as part of their job and make their children's education their business• Interpretation of the national curriculum is shared with parents for them to see where they are able to help• Teachers' discussion with parents puts emphasis on developing basic academic skills as part of the personal education curriculum. (f) Ideas of ways parents can monitor and assist their children with classroom instruction are shared
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good relationship between the school and parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools' open door policies encourage parents to visit the school and talk over any concern with the principal and



	<p>their children's teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools have clear and meaningful strategies to connect learning resources (i.e. teachers and parents)• In collaboration with parents schools make learners attend classes everyday• Parents volunteer to provide labour when necessary• Parents pay their school fund on time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive school climate and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive school climate is associated with safe and clean environment, availability of water and toilet facilities, enough trees for shade, enough classrooms with proper windows and doors and enough space for exercise activities.• The schools' democratic leadership styles attract parents to be involved in school activities• Schools prepare food and/or give financial incentives and/or certificates to parents who participate in school activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers' and parents' perception and attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers and parents believe that rural context does not impact on a success practice of parental involvement• Parents' concerns about school issues are recognised as valid and worthy of consideration by the school• There is active Parent-Teacher Organisation at school• The school asks parents to assist in dealing with and correcting learners' misbehaviours• Parents assist in dealing with and improving learners' poor behaviour



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation with teacher training programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is communication and a memorandum of understanding between schools and teacher training programmes• Schools contribute to Teacher Education curricula content
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some staff members are leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff member(s) (can be a teacher or school secretary) is assigned to organise and coordinate assistance of voluntary help from parents• When a parent does not attend parents meetings, a staff member is assigned the responsibility of conducting a survey by telephone or home-based face-to-face in order to talk with parents about why they did not attend parents' meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical but constructive questioning into school activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents critically but constructively question and influence schools' practices and policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographic information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The principal and teachers are professionally trained• Teachers receive education in relation to parental involvement• Parents are able to read and write

The elucidation outlined above presents indicators this study can look at as basics in order to investigate parental involvement in academic education of learners in schools. Nevertheless, the research findings reviewed point out that these indicators are difficult to implement in rural schools and among parents from poor communities (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Lapp et al., 2002; Burke & Picus, 2001; Stein & Thorkildsen 1999; Fink & Stoll, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1994). The whole current study investigate the problem of parental involvement in rural lower primary schools by studying whether and how rural lower primary schools in northern Namibia in Ohangwena Region promote parental involvement in their own way and according to their contexts. However, my particular interest at Phase 1 level of this study was to identify schools in which parents are highly involved and schools in which parents have low involvement. Although the

literature reviewed indicate multiple activities of parent educational involvement, there are involvement activities which are more significantly associated with increasing learners' performance in elementary schools. WCER's (1995) findings clearly show indicators of high involvement. Moreover, most literature reviewed (Barnard, 2004; Barton et al., 2004; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Stern, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Fan, 2001; Maynard & Howley, 1997) associate high involvement with the same indicators clearly stipulated by WCER's (1995) findings. To sum up, the following factors are indicators of high involvement expected from schools. Therefore, schools which indicate most (if not all) of these indicators were regarded as having high involvement.

High involvement at schools is characterised by:

- Conducive climate to parental support;
- Provision of educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement to parents and teachers;
- Use of community resources and funds of knowledge of community experts;
- Provision of opportunities for technical support (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) for classroom activities to parents;
- Use of various options to communicate with parents;
- Involvement of parents in school policy formulation and school governance;
- Positive attitude towards involvement;
- Schools understanding and valuing of involvement
- Critical but constructive questioning into school activities

2.9 CHALLENGES AND COMMON BARRIERS ASSOCIATED WITH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Although parental involvement may be a worthwhile venture, it is not without its challenges. Some research findings present stereotypical judgments that say parents' economic, emotional and/ or educational deficiencies potentially inhibit their educational relationship and support to schools. According to the literature reviewed, there is a strong relationship between parents' socio-economic background and parents' level of involvement, which further implies that parents with stressed backgrounds are reluctant and are not motivated to get involved like parents with high and better socio-economic backgrounds (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999). Moreover, low achievement of academic skills among school children is associated with stressed socio-economic status (De Civita, Pagani, Vitaro & Tremblay, 2004).

Other researchers noted that parents do want to become involved in order to help their children learn, but they need assistance and guidance in order to do so. Therefore, other findings (Stein and Thorkildsen (1999) and Edward and Knight (1994) put the blame on educators as they conclude that even open-minded professionals regard cooperation with parents in terms of learners' education as the undermining of their professional status. At the same time professionals are concerned that parents might take over their responsibilities. Hence, they used increased distance as their coping strategy. Studies reviewed indicate that most parents have little knowledge of how to be involved.

To summarise, Lee and Bowen (2006); Hill and Tylor,(2004); Wright and Stegelin (2003); Stein and Thorkildsen (1999); Maynard and Howley (1997), Edwards and Knight (1994) and Finders and Lewis (1994) identify special challenges often associated with rural life. The identified challenges are isolation, poverty and lack of job opportunities, low achieving children, lack of knowledge about how each can use the other person more effectively, time constraint, lack of literacy skills and cultural mismatches/ misunderstandings and discomfort, negative experience of schooling and low educational attainment, and feeling less comfort and welcome to visit the school for events and activities. Further argument clarified that isolation restricts rural schools from making use of urban-based resources. Poverty limits parents' ability to provide for their children and to augment their children's education with resources in the home. Reduced financial resources may limit families' abilities to provide educational materials and opportunities and may influence parents' educational expectations for their children. Lack of job opportunities makes it harder for rural learners to see any financial benefit to attendance or success in school. Moreover, parents' negative experience of schooling and low educational attainment may limit parents' their ability to help their children with homework, and their familiarity with educational resources available in the community. Parents of children with low achievement are viewed as possessing less knowledge and skills to support their children and thus may encounter barriers to their involvement. Parents who are less able to visit the school for events and activities are viewed as uncaring, an attitude that may have negative ramifications for their children. These parents indicate that they possess less cultural capital therefore may not obtain information about how best to help with homework, what school related topics to discuss with children, and the importance of conveying high educational expectations.

Restricted access to the education social capital in schools may reduce the quality or impact on achievement of parents' home educational involvement. Prejudicial treatment or attitudes parents receive from school staff make them feel less able to tap the potential of the school's social and material resources and thus becomes barriers to their involvement.

Although research shows that it is difficult to overcome the disadvantages associated with low socio-economic status and rural contexts, such assertions, however, should not discourage rural schools from practising parental involvement, because research also shows that parents of every socio-economic and ethnic background are concerned about their children's education (Kreider, 2005; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999; Morrow, 1995). In addition, parental involvement has been identified to be a possible strategy for improving children's educational performance (Barnard, 2004; Jeynes, 2003). Schools are seen as venues of hope and sites of resistance to the oppressive theories. The oppressive theory states that parents from low-income population lack skills and capital needed for making a difference in educational development of their children. Since schools are the key ingredient in effective and successful parental involvement, they should reach out to parents. What rural schools can do in general to overcome those challenges is what the current study tried to realise.

2.10 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE AND SILENCES IN THE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE BASE ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

This study focused on critical analysis of parental involvement in academic education of lower primary learners. To narrow my research to the area of parental involvement I began by reading widely cited articles and other resources on related topics, parental/family involvement and school-family-partnership in education. Some of the literature I have reviewed for learning more about parental involvement in education of children at school and/or home was Harry, Sturges and Klingner, (2005); Barton et al. (2004); Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004); Stern (2003); Epstein et al. (2002); Epstein (2002); Epstein and Sheldon (2002); Sanders (2002); Cooper and Gandara (2001); Lindsay (2001); Burke and Picus (2001); Sanders (2001); Heneveld and Craig (1996) and Dekker and Lemmer (1993). This literature deals with the what, how and effect of family and community involvement in, and partnership with schools.

Looking at most of these researchers' findings more critically, I have realised that most of the published reports on parental involvement have been conducted among families and in schools situated in rural and urban areas of developed countries. Although the literature presents compelling evidence of positive correlation between family/parent involvement in education and increase in learners' learning and achievement, it further indicates a strong relationship between poor involvement and parents' socio-economic background. Furthermore, the research reports concluded

that parental involvement is difficult to implement in rural schools. Information on how to ensure the practice of parental involvement that specifically improves and promotes learners' learning in academic subjects is frequently lacking. Until such a time that researchers study contextually based parental involvement, rural schools will be seen as unable to practise involvement, and rural parents are viewed as deficient in some way.

If the intention of the parental involvement approach is to move all parents of all social classes into closer partnership with schools, researchers need to be realistic and consider what is contextually possible. It is disappointing that more research of this type has not been sufficiently done in developing countries such as Namibia where the implementation of change is a major problem. People in urban areas, especially of developed countries, believe that certain ideas are difficult or impossible to implement in rural areas. Critical theorists claim that it is from this sort of language labelling that critical theory seeks to free us. The philosophy of critical theory purports that the situation is by no means as hopeless as we are made to believe. People should change that form of oppressive ideas and liberate themselves from what enslaves them (Higgs & Smith, 2002; Freire, 1993).

Studies, which resulted in disappointment of parental involvement practice in rural areas and among low-income parents, do not clearly indicate whether the issue of context had been considered (Stern, 2003; Lapp et al., 2002; Burke & Picus, 2001; Sanders, 2001; Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999) i.e. whether what is contextually possible in terms of the implementation of parental involvement has been considered. These studies do not further indicate whether attempts were made to study and understand how parental involvement functions in relation to the rural context. No clear documentation was given of what and how activities were differently organised and delivered in schools among parents in high 'at risk' communities. There is no clear and sufficient indication of attempts to find out how parental involvement can be improved and sustained in rural areas. A parental involvement approach works best when it responds to particulars of the contexts it serves.

There are many strategies for collaborating with parents and families. Some strategies can be common across environments and cultures, others should be chosen and adapted and/or designed to fit the specific contexts and communities. It is arguable that the frameworks used by the researchers to study parental involvement are not equitable towards different socio-economic environments and that the researchers are not likely to have understanding of parents of all environments. In accordance, Maynard and Howley (1997) stress that approaches used to study parental involvement and produced negative results in rural areas were not developed with rural communities in mind.

Rural environments have unique features and needs, which demand unique approaches and therefore differ from each other as well as from urban and sub-urban ones. Anderson et al. (1994:43) argue: *“All educational practices are context bound, and that which might be effective or appropriate in one context might be ineffective or inappropriate in another.”*

Some studies indicate conflicting findings: Maynard and Howley’s (1997) study of 296 schools in Missouri found that parental involvement was higher in rural than in urban communities. However, their other findings from a large national survey of eighth-grade students suggest that parental involvement tends to be higher in urban and suburban communities. The same study found that suburban parents from middle and upper middle-class communities were the most involved.

Heneveld and Craig’s (1996) study has compared a selection of World Bank supported projects designed for improving the quality of primary education in Sub-Sahara Africa with world-wide research findings on school effectiveness and school improvement. The conclusion of that comparative study indicates that the World Bank projects in Africa had been particularly disappointing in this (practice of parental involvement) respect. However, the same report presents that some African educators who participated in the World Bank supported projects that formulated the framework for improving the quality of primary education in Sub-Sahara Africa indicate the potential of parental involvement when contextually modified. Two contrary views emerged in the same report.

The challenge of involving low-income parents is also indicated in Stein and Thorkildsen’s (1999) study. The conclusion of Stein and Thorkildsen’s study presents conflicting findings:

- Parents of children in rural schools participate more than parents in urban schools.
- Greater parent involvement is found among parents at the higher socio-economic status level, and more involvement is needed among parents at the lower socio-economic status level (Stein & Thorkildsen, 1999).

I am not contesting the reliability and validity of the findings of other studies nor refuting their conclusions, but I am engaging with ideological formation (Leonardo, 2004) and trying to understand whether they expected one change to fit all. My argument is based on the view of critical theory that puts criticism at the centre of its knowledge production and that encourages critical thinking positively. Critical theory questions the assumption that some research results, especially produced by developed countries, are unproblematically right and unquestionable (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Critical theorists are frequently misunderstood. Therefore, as

understood in critical theory “*criticism functions not so much as a form of refutation or an exercise in rejection, but rather as a precondition for intellectual engagement with an ideological formation*” (Leonardo, 2004: 13). To borrow an idea from Hooks (1993), I can say that critical interrogation is not the same as dismissal. It should not be misunderstood as pessimistic and judged as a form of negativity. It is a pedagogical paradigm that values debate, openness to different ideas, and commitment to democratic process. Critical theory is not a form of refutation. This in itself made me question whether other findings are valid for all contexts.

I strongly believe that no matter how well designed and implemented a parental involvement approach is, it cannot be applied to the same effect in all contexts. Wright and Stegelin (2003: 69) argue that although cultural patterns are real and might affect all members of a certain racial background, families live their cultures in their own unique ways according to their contexts. Therefore, economically disadvantaged and rural contexts should not be viewed as a barrier to getting parents involved. Factors determining effectiveness of parental involvement in education are complex interwoven and dependent on the local context and conditions in which the school operates as well as on the culture of the people who live in a specific environment.

Because of the importance of the context in which each school operates, the characteristics that work in one setting may not necessarily be applicable in another. Importantly, the amount of actual research on parental involvement in the developing world, and particularly in Namibia, upon which this study’s framework is based, is limited. Some of the studies, which I have read, conducted in developing countries (Heneveld & Craig, 1996), have not clearly given enough attention to parents as sources for maximising children’s academic learning. The studies have not sufficiently indicated the types and activities of parental involvement which are compatible with poor socio-economic conditions. These studies were mostly designed to obtain parental involvement for improving the schools’ physical facilities. For example, parents were involved but not fully responsible for construction with technical support (Burundi, Chad and Somalia); providing teachers’ houses (Lesotho, Malawi); preparing the grounds and sanitary facilities (Burundi, Mauritania, Somalia); providing local materials, maintenance and unskilled labour (Ghana, Mali and Niger); feeding programs (Ghana) (Heneveld & Craig, 1996). Parents’ contributions in these countries can be regarded as resources going into education, and not mechanisms to bring the school and parents together for learners’ quality academic education. Little explicit attention was given to involving parents as learning resources people. The same studies had insufficient focus on improving parents’ assistance in academic education dimension. As Heneveld and Craig (1996) analysed the 26 World Bank supported projects on improving the quality of primary schools in Sub-Sahara Africa, they

acknowledge the shortcomings of their study of not indicating the effective process for inciting change in Sub-Sahara Africa's primary schools. Published studies on parental involvement in education of children particularly in Namibia are either scarce or not easily available. These arguments strongly add to my curiosity to explore the issue of critical analysing parental involvement for supporting learners' academic education in northern Namibia's rural lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region.

The proposed study intends to present a true life picture (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004), as far as implementation of parental involvement is concerned, in selected rural lower primary schools in northern Namibia in the Ohangwena Region. Wright and Stegeline (2003: 69) argue that *although cultural patterns are real and might affect all members of a certain racial background, families live their cultures in their own unique ways according to their contexts.*

2.11 CONCLUSION

Parental involvement is an area of pedagogical discourse based on Critical Theory as an aspect of quality education. In quality education, criticism functions to change a schools' approach of educating children to be based on Ecological Theory that is complementary teaching and learning contexts. Ecological theory influences most education systems as they come to the realisation that from birth onwards, effective learning results from multiple contexts: families, schools, community settings and institutions. This realisation drives a new and strong emphasis on shared educational accountability. I base this perception on the research findings of school's performance and on the argument that, although effective schools remain critical in many communities, children face significant barriers that schools alone cannot possibly overcome (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Sanders, 2001; Chapman & Aspin, 1997). School and life success requires an array of learning supports which should complement one another. Moreover, if the intention of a new trend in education is to move all parents of all social classes into closer partnership with schools, there is a need to address research findings which indicate a view that rural parents are deficient educators, and that parental involvement is difficult to implement in rural schools and among low socio-economic status parents. This situation may not be as hopeless as indicated by some researchers. There should be a way of improving and sustaining this important approach to education even among rural communities.

Therefore, working with parents of all socio-economic status should not be undertaken lightly by schools. Parents should be seen as potential partners with associated rights and sharing aims with

professionals with the common goal of educating children to become responsible, competent, successful and useful citizens. Most research findings reviewed indicate disappointment with parental involvement practices in rural areas. Research results point out that parental involvement is difficult to carry out in rural schools and among parents from poor communities. A significant gap exists in the research findings of whether attempts were made to investigate the practice of parental involvement according to rural contexts. In Namibia, no clear documentation exists of how parental involvement can be promoted in rural schools and among parents in high ‘at-risk’ communities. Therefore, the proposed study tried to investigate how schools and parents from Northern Namibia’s rural areas (Ohangwena Region) perceive and practice parental involvement for the promotion of learners’ academic learning. The study also investigates why parental involvement as an approach to education is context bound and unique.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS OF PHASE 1: QUANTITATIVE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research design indicates the structure and procedure followed to answer research questions. Based on this premise, the research was conducted in a sequence process of two phases (Phase 1, presented in this chapter and Phase 2, presented in Chapter 4). The purpose of this study at Phase 1 was to determine rural lower primary school principals' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the academic education of learners and how they describe the involvement activities they employ. Phase 1 employed a quantitative research methodology centred on survey responses and statistical analysis. The purpose of the research at Phase 2 was to understand parental involvement in the academic education of learners as it is practiced in rural lower primary schools and to construct a knowledge base on how and why parental involvement is done the way it is in a rural context in Namibia. The methodology regarded suitable for Phase 2 was interviewing and qualitative data analysis. Thus the study implemented a mixed method type research design. This chapter presents how the quantitatively focused research questions of this study were addressed. The chapter also presents the methodology, and how quantitative data were collected and analysed. The chapter concludes with the summary of main ideas discussed in this section.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following sub-questions were investigated in Phase 1 of the study:

- Whether and how is parental involvement perceived and practised by professional educators (principals and teachers) for supporting learners' academic education in rural lower primary schools?
- What barriers to parental involvement do rural lower primary schools in Namibia experience?

As indicated in 1.5.1.12 (Chapter1) respondents to the questionnaire (principals and teachers) of this study are referred to as professional educators throughout this study's report. This is done to maintain consistency of the use of terminologies and concepts in reporting and discussing this study's results and findings (chapter 3-5).

3.3 PROPOSITIONS

Hypotheses are statements of the relations between two or more variables (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Cone & Foster 1993). Hypotheses are predictions about the nature of the relationship between the variables identified in the research questions (Cone & Foster, 1993). This study's process of reviewing literature and reflective thinking on literature reviewed led to the formulation of hypotheses required for advancement of scientific knowledge about parental involvement practice in rural lower primary schools (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005; Cone & Foster, 1993). The general existing research theory states that involvement of parents in the education of learners is enhanced by related conditions within the context of schools such as geographical locations, social, cultural and economic conditions, education, and policy. I agree with some researchers who speculate that high involvement at schools is characterised by a climate conducive to parental support; schools' understanding and valuing of involvement; provision of educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement to parents and teachers; use of community resources and funds of knowledge of community experts, and the learners' parents; provision of opportunities for technical support (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) for classroom activities to parents; use of various options to communicate with parents; involvement of parents in power sharing and decision- making; and positive attitude towards involvement (Barnard, 2004; Barton et al., 2004; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Stern, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Fan, 2001; Maynard & Howley, 1997; WCER, 1995).

The relationship expressed in this theory of deduced educated guesses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) indicates tentative statements of relationship explored by Phase 2 of this study. The evidence to support the claims of this study (i.e. there is a relationship between increased parental involvement and professional educators' (principals and teachers) perception and practice of involvement as well as their attitude towards involvement) was collected. The propositions explored by this study were:

- According to the perceptions of professional educators, schools with *high ratings* on conducive climate to parental support; provision of educational opportunities for knowledge

development about parental involvement to parents; use of community resources and funds, and knowledge of community experts and learners' parents; provision of opportunities for technical support (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) for classroom activities to parents; use of various options to communicate with parents; involvement of parents in power sharing and decision-making; and positive attitude towards involvement *will have high parental involvement*.

- According to the perceptions of professional educators, schools with *average ratings* on conducive climate to parental support; provision of educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement to parents; use of community resources and funds and knowledge of community experts and learners' parents; provision of opportunities for technical support (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) for classroom activities to parents; use of various options to communicate with parents; involvement of parents in power sharing and decision-making; and positive attitude towards involvement *will have intermediate parental involvement*.
- According to the perceptions of professional educators, schools with *low ratings* on conducive climate to parental support; provision of educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement to parents; use of community resources and funds, and knowledge of community experts and learners' parents; provision of opportunities for technical support (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) for classroom activities to parents; use of various options to communicate with parents; involvement of parents in power sharing and decision-making; and positive attitude towards involvement *will have low parental involvement*.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: QUANTITATIVE STUDY

As critical educational research, this study's substantive agenda was to examine and interrogate the relationships and collaborations between lower primary schools and communities (parents being defined as part of communities). The study further examined how schools perpetuated equalities and reduced inequalities through power sharing between professional educators and parents. As indicated in Section 1.6 of Chapter 1, this study is established on a combination of theoretical paradigms that assumes a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodological research approaches.

I chose a mixed method design, which is based on my underlying research questions and objectives, rather than by a particular approach which is popular in social science research. My reasoning draws upon Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) who consider “*research questions to be more important than the method or the paradigm that underlies the method*” and they refer to this as the “*dictatorship of the research question*”(Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003: 21). Therefore, this study operated from a common belief among many researchers that research questions determine the research design. In accordance, the study’s research questions influenced what was to be investigated (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004).

According to Sechrest and Sidana (1995) mixed method design embodies strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and results in outstanding outcomes. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 15) concur as they state that “*taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions*”. Teddlie and Tashakkorie (2003) introduce two decision rules for combining qualitative and quantitative data collection in a study:

- *deciding the priority of either the quantitative or the qualitative method*
- *deciding on the sequence of the two by identifying the order of conducting the complementary method (either a preliminary or a follow up phase)* (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003: 27)

Accordingly, in this study, quantitative data collection precedes qualitative in order to explore and test variables. However, the qualitative approach was given the dominant status in the whole process. The emphasis on the qualitative phase was determined by considerations of research questions (see 1.3). Most of the research questions in this study are concerned with the way in which professional educators and parents define the reality they live. Although quantitative approach (Phase 1) might demonstrate causality, it might be limited in realism. Therefore, a qualitative approach (Phase 2) facilitated the exploration of the phenomenon (the practice of parental involvement) in a natural setting because of the concern for context, and to maintain an openness about what was observed, and collected in order to avoid missing something important. Hence, realism is increased. From the phenomenological point of view, the situation could be understood from the meaning participants attach to it in order to define their own reality. The purpose of the study was to understand the reality of parental involvement in rural, lower primary schools. Wiersma and Jurs (2005) view the accounts of reality as accounts of insiders, that is, those

who live the lives or do the things that are being analysed. Parents, teachers and principals were the most important informants for the study. Therefore, the qualitative approach was the best method to capture their perceptions in order to obtain an accurate measure of reality.

This sequence (quan – QUAL) was done to make inquiry move beyond exploration and description to explanation and in-depth investigation for understanding with six case schools. The quest for understanding and in-depth inquiry is one of the aims of qualitative approach (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Creswell et al., 2003). Therefore, the Phase 1 results were used to develop factors that informed the identification and purpose of Phase 2 that served as the backbone of this entire study.

A mixed methods design enabled me to answer simultaneously confirmatory, exploratory and explanatory questions presented in 1.3 of chapter 1.

The use of both types of questions, exploratory and explanatory, verified (quantitatively) and generated theory (qualitatively) from data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003)

The explanation of this research project process is interwoven with a visual model showing the matrix of the study’s design and key steps reflecting on the process (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005; Creswell et al., 2003). Hence, the following table (Table 3.1) indicates the visual presentations of the study design typologies and the key steps of the research process which reflect quantitative preliminary basic and qualitative predominantly design (quan →QUAL (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003; Creswell, 2003):

TABLE 3.1: The major typologies of the study design and the key steps reflecting on the research process (Adapted from Creswell et al., 2003)

Quan →QUAL¹

Quan → Data Collection	Quan→ Data Analysis	Quan → Data Interpretation	QUAL → Data Collection	QUAL → Data Analysis	QUAL → Data Interpretation	Interpretation of Entire Analysis
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¹ Quan stands for quantitative, QUAL stands for qualitative, '→' stands for sequential, capital letters denote high weight/dominant/more priority, and lower case or small letters denote lower weight or less dominant in the table.

The major rationales for choosing the Mixed Method Research Design are:

- Development, initiation and expansion. The quantitative data in Phase 1 lead to the design of a second phase which is qualitative. The findings from Phase 1 inform Phase 2 (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003)
- Best chance of producing more complete knowledge and answering research questions. My decision was influenced by investigators who are well informed in mixed methods (Creswell, 2003; Creswell et al., 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, October; Phillips, 2004). These investigators assert that researchers who prefer to use Mixed Design should do it with respect to their underlying research questions, rather than with regard to some preconceived biases about which research paradigm should have hegemony in social science research. Research questions function as the heart of the design (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003), because they guided initial data collection. Punch says research questions direct empirical procedures (Punch, 2005). Nevertheless, research questions answered by Phase 2 data improved after the empirical study had taken place (Punch, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).
- To increase and improve generalisability of the study results. Surveying a random selection from the population of interest improves generalisability (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, October). However, one of the main limitations of this study is that results cannot be generalised.
- Methodological triangulation and complementarity. This refers to the use of multi-methods to study a single problem (parental involvement in academic education of learners in rural lower primary schools), to reduce the problems associated with singular methods, and contact effective research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003; Janesick, 2000; Stake, 2000). My reasoning also draws upon Sechrest and Sidana (1995) who believe that mixed methods research incorporates the strengths of both methodologies and produces a superior product.

3.4.1 Methodology

The methodology of the investigation denotes the value of selected measurement instruments and the reasoning behind the selection. Measurement instruments are techniques characterised by questions which are asked (in a survey questionnaire) to provide data relevant to the research questions (Punch, 2005). In this study, a questionnaire with closed and statement questions (see Appendix C for school principal and teacher survey on practice of parental involvement in learners’

academic education) was used to collect data for Phase 1. As well, this section presents the population and sampling, development of the questionnaire, how the draft questionnaire was piloted and how the final questionnaire has been applied.

3.4.1.1 The Research population and consecutive sampling

The population of 764 lower primary schools in rural northern Namibia is distributed over four regions (Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto). All four regions are similar in regards to economic and educational levels of the inhabitants of rural areas across northern Namibia. The major differences, pertaining to this study, across these regions rest in ethnic/lingual divisions and geographic location. Therefore, a judgement was made to select the schools based primarily on dialect (i.e. Oshikwanyama, a dialect of Oshiwambo, the principal language). In this case, it was decided to select the region using the dialect in which I am most fluent as it was expected that not all participants would be fluent in written or spoken English.

The Ohangwena region with 205 lower primary schools (See Appendix D for statistics of schools in Ohangwena region) was deemed sufficient and feasible for this study to allow the drawing of conclusions. Hence a judgement sampling of all lower primary schools in Ohangwena region was done for this study. The whole population of the lower primary school was regarded a sufficient size to achieve acceptable population validity. Moreover, this sample size would allow reasonable generalisation to the population of the region. Questionnaires were sent to the principal and one of the lower primary teachers of all schools with a lower primary phase in the Ohangwena region.

Schools which participated in this study were chosen according to the following general standards:

- Location: Rural area. Schools should be located in a rural area. This criterion was based on the fact that the silence in the research findings revealed by the literature reviewed indicated the need for further research to be done in rural areas and among parents from low socio-economic status.
- Phase Level: Lower primary. Schools with full lower primary phases were chosen. The focus ‘academic education at lower primary phase’ was chosen because academic education influences a child’s future and its foundation is laid at the lower primary level. Therefore, this phase was chosen based on the belief that the foundation of academic education is at the lower primary level and early intervention has important long-term effects (Hornby, 2000). Success or failure at this level influences academic performance throughout a child’s life.

3.4.1.2 Development of the questionnaire

The content of this study's questionnaire (for principals and teachers) was developed after reviewing literature and other empirical studies (Neuman, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Burke & Picus, 2001; Hornby, 2000; Chapman & Aspin, 1997; Smith et al., 1997; Heneveld & Craig, 1996) on factors impacting parental involvement. Hence, the knowledge gained from this literature served as guiding frameworks for measurement development.

A hypothetico-deductive quantitative (top-down) methodology, in which empirical data is tested as objectively as possible, was followed to determine whether certain generalizations about parental involvement found to exist in other parent populations (see 2.10) were also true for the practice of this educational approach in rural Namibia's lower primary schools. First, the hypotheses were stated based on existing theory (currently available scientific explanations). Then, a questionnaire was developed to collect data to be used to test the hypotheses empirically. The central concept of the study, which is parental involvement, had been looked at to determine the suitable and appropriate method (i.e. questionnaire) to measure the variable. Therefore, measures of the concept were operationalised as questions. To ensure that reliable results would eventually be generated by the questionnaire, the questions were written and rewritten for clarity and completeness. Questions were clustered according to variables to be measured, and were weaved together for a smooth flow.

- Content validation of the questionnaire

Neuman's (2003) recommendation for measurement validity guided the construction and development of this study's questionnaire. As recommended by Neuman (2003), a process of three steps was followed: (1) identification of constructs (2) definition of constructs and (3) development of indicators that tap the whole definition. The productive relationship which makes the two environmental systems (school and family) improve one another's effectiveness (Weiss, 2005; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004) and ultimately share the responsibility of educating learners together for the enhancement of learners' intellectual development implies the following constructs and their definitions. Indicators of parental involvement as represented by statement questions (per construct) in a questionnaire tap from the constructs' definitions (Neuman, 2003). The following constructs covered the content of the questionnaire:

Section B: School climate; Development opportunities for parents; Schools' linkages with community resources; Use of parents as resources; Communication options; Power sharing and

joint decision- making. Section C: Schools' perceptions and beliefs of parental involvement; Schools' consultations with advisory services to empower teachers. Section D: Barriers that prevent or interfere with schools' practice of parental involvement.

- Item format used in the questionnaire

Closed-ended questions were asked. Delpont (2005) acknowledges the use of closed questions for a meaningful and verified comprehensiveness of the phenomenon, quick but fair availability of the investigation results, better comparisons of responses, easy coding and statistical analysis. I chose the survey questioning type of method due to its popularity, greater uniformity of responses, easy processing (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Babbie, 1992) and the nature of the data needed (see Appendix B for statistics of schools in Ohangwena Region).

This survey (questionnaire) of the study consists of four sections, A: Demographic Information; B: Schools' Practice of Parental Involvement; C: Schools' Attitude towards Parental Involvement and D: Barriers to Parental Involvement. Section A is comprised of demographic information to compile a demographic profile. The demographic information section consists of questions asked for information about respondents' personal attributes, his/her professional qualifications and the size of the school. Demographic questions were asked to reveal who the respondents were and what type of school they are working in. Section B was comprised of 5 questions. The Section C was comprised of 2 questions and the Section D was comprised of 1 question. Each question of each section consisted of a list of statements/indicators (the concepts 'statement' and 'indicator' are used interchangeably in this thesis) provide empirical representation of parental involvement. Code numbers indicated the value of words respondents believed represented their beliefs, understandings, thoughts and experiences: Always (A) designated as 4, Most of the time (MT) designated as 3, Sometimes (ST) designated as 2 and Never (N) designated as 1 were used in answering sub-section 3-8 (of Section B). Code numbers indicated Strongly Agree (SA) designated as 4, Agree (A) designated as 3, Disagree (D) designated as 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) designated as 1 were used in answering sub-section 9-10 (of Section C). Code numbers indicated Often (O) designated as 4, Sometimes (STS) designated as 3, Seldom (S) designated as 2 and Never (N) designated as 1 were used in answering sub-section 11(of Section D). This information helped to (a) explain the results of survey (b) explore the findings of research and (c) identify schools for phase 2. The respondents answered the questions by circling an appropriate number.

3.4.1.3 Pilot application of the draft questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted on five principals and five teachers. Small-scale piloting is recommended for feasibility, convenience and cost effectiveness (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005; Punch, 2005; Janesick, 2000). The people who participated in a pilot study were typical of the people from which the main study intended to collect data. After the respondents finished completing the pre-testing questionnaires, they were asked to give their comments or constructive criticism on wording and sequence, redundancy, missing and confusing questions. These comments were invited to reveal errors in and validate the content clarity of the instrument, improve questions and format, and to refine the research instrument before the main investigation commenced (Delport, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The respondents did not suggest any change to the instrument. The results of the pilot study were not included in the main findings of the study.

3.4.1.4 Application of the questionnaire

For this study the survey strategy was used to collect adequate, relevant quantitative data from principals and teachers on the particulars of parental involvement in rural schools. Quantitative data refers to empirical information provided by school principals and teachers which were turned into assigned numeric codes. Numbers, indicating participants' responses, were used to construct variable degrees of participants' sentiments. Results were expected to provide descriptive information and shed light on research questions 1, 2 and 3 (see section 1.3 of Chapter 1 for research questions).

A survey was conducted in all rural lower primary schools (205 schools) in the purposefully chosen Ohangwena Region with the intention of describing rural lower primary schools' strategies and processes of parental involvement. The survey data was also hoped to identify schools with high, average and low participation rates of parental involvement. The questionnaire strategy provided a numeric description of opinions of school principals and teachers on the particulars of parental involvement applied and experienced by rural schools. Self-completion questionnaires were sent to schools via school cluster heads. The principals and teachers were asked to give their permission to be involved in the study and to sign the consent forms (see Appendix C). Separate agreements were made about the date to return the questionnaires to either the school cluster heads, or the inspectors' offices or to post them directly to me through my postal address. Schools which could be reached via telephone were contacted to remind them of the due date for the questionnaires. However, most schools did not have telephones thus could not be reached to be reminded of the due date. The bad roads to and distances between schools made it practically difficult for all the schools which did not

return their questionnaires to be reached in person within a limited time in which the data was to be collected. Although the pilot test (see 3.4.1.3) established that the language and reading level of the questionnaire were appropriate, the relatively low return rate of the main study's questionnaire (see Table 3.2) suggests that the second language questionnaire presented an obstacle to most principals and teachers. This is evidenced by the increased level of co-operation received at Phase 2 of the study when all but three of the participants opted for the interview to be conducted in their own language.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

After collection, the data had to be prepared for data entry. The coding of all the information on the questionnaire was done by assigning numbers to the answers indicated in all sections of the questionnaire. After the responses on the questionnaire were coded, the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria captured them in Microsoft Excel and then imported them into SAS v8.2 software (SAS Institute Inc. 2004) for analysis. Before the analysis of data started, the checking of the dataset for mistakes and errors was done to avoid the distortion of the results of statistical analysis. Errors were crosschecked by the inspection of the frequencies for each of the variables. The corrections of errors in the data file were done by going back to the questionnaires and checking what value should have been entered. A thorough attempt was made to start the analysis process with a clean, error-free data set. Pallant (2001) argues that the success of research depends on this process. The descriptive statistics, including tallying of frequencies in the calculation of percentages, and central tendency summaries were used for data analysis.

3.5.1 Frequency analysis

One of the most basic ways to describe the data value of variables is to construct a frequency distribution. A frequency distribution is a systematic arrangement of data values in which the frequencies of each unique data value are shown (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The meaning of the data is conveyed by arranging the data into a more interpretable form (i.e. by forming frequency distributions, calculating percentages and generating graphical displays).

Professional educators' answers are separated into categories, and the responses to those categories are reported by frequency and percentage. The frequency tables list response categories of different variables.

Frequency analysis generated demographic information from Section A, schools' practice of parental involvement information from Section B, schools' attitude towards parental involvement information from Section C, and information about barriers to parental involvement as experienced by schools from Section D. The demographic section presented information on age (categorised), gender, mother tongue, professional qualification and the number of years (categorised) respondents have been in the teaching profession, describing the sample participating in the study (see Table 3.3: page 15). When a variable has a wide range of data values, interpretation may be facilitated by collapsing the values of the variables into intervals (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Therefore, in this study, a grouped frequency distribution for respondents' ages and number of years in teaching was constructed around nine and ten equal sized and mutually exclusive intervals respectively. The frequencies of variables in Sections B, C and D of the questionnaire are shown in Tables 3.4 (p. 19), 3.5 (p. 21), 3.6 (p. 22), 3.7 (p. 24), 3.8 (p. 29) and Figures 3.1 (p. 18) and 3.2 (p. 20).

3.6 RESULTS OF PHASE 1 OF THE STUDY: QUANTITATIVE

The order of the results and interpretation presentations correspond with the order of the sections in the data collection instrument (questionnaire). This was done to maintain consistency and easy understanding of results. Consistency in presentation allows the reader to refer much more easily to instruments for comparisons and understanding.

The Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria, Ms J. Sommerville (Senior Consultant Department of Statistics) and Dr F Reynecke (Senior lecturer, Department of Statistics) assisted with the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire and quality control of the interpretation of the results.

3.6.1 Sample return

Four-hundred and ten questionnaires were sent out to 205 schools (i.e., two questionnaires per school). Schools were requested to send two responses, one from the principal and one from any lower primary (grades 1-3) teacher selected by the principal. Responses were received from 87 schools (a return rate of 42.43% of the schools), broken down into 66 principals and 80 teachers. School responses were as indicated in the table (Table 3.2) below.

TABLE 3.2: Schools from which questionnaires were received

Respondents returned the questionnaires	Number of schools from whom questionnaires were received	Number of questionnaires received
Principal and one teacher	39	78
One teacher	15	15
Principal alone	21	21
Principal and two teachers	5	15
Principal and three teachers	1	4
Three teachers	1	3
Two teachers	5	10
TOTAL	87	146

- Establishing the consistency between the responses of principals and teachers

Because the entire population of the Ohangwena region was targeted, the response rate was not sufficient to analyse principal and teacher responses separately. Therefore, it was considered necessary to analyse the combined responses, if possible. To combine responses required the establishment of the similarity between the responses of principals and teachers. Cronbach alpha was used to test for internal consistency in the responses to all items except for demographics (questions 1 and 2). Cronbach alpha is designed to determine whether the items that made up the scale are measuring the same underlying construct, so generating co-efficients of internal consistency (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005; Borg & Gall, 1989). Furthermore, Borg and Gall recommend Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha "*when items are not scored dichotomously*" (Borg & Gall, 1989: 261). Pallant (2001) recommends that ideally the Cronbach's alpha of a scale should be above 0.7.

Where sufficient internal consistency was found in the subsections of the questionnaire, independent t-tests were used to compare the average scores of the respondents based on their position.

- opinions of school climate, school's provision of educational opportunities for parents, what happens at school in terms of parental involvement, schools' ways of communicating with parents and the extent to which schools involve parents in various committees and policies (question 3-4, 6-8)
- attitude towards involvement (question 9)
- experience of barriers to involvement(question 11)

Where internal consistency was insufficient in the subsections of the questionnaire, Chi-square tests were used to assess the relationship among the item score of the respondents based on their position.

- use of community resources (elderly community members to educate parents on child care; professional health workers to develop parents' understanding about the importance of providing children with healthy food, appropriate clothes and protection from diseases; community members specially invited for fund raising events) (question 5.1, 5.2, 5.4)
- their thoughts (parents are too poor to provide and strengthen their children's education; teachers are skilled enough to take care of learners' needs, no need for parents' support at all; parents have unique skills and knowledge to assist their children's academic learning; rural contexts do not interfere with parental involvement practice) (question 10.1, 10.2, 10.4, 10.5)

Since the Chi-square test found statistical evidence of a significant association between the position of respondents in questions 5.3 and 10.3, these questions were excluded from the average. The exclusion was done to avoid the possibility of biasing the averages for schools from where the responses from 1 principal and 1 teacher have not been received. From this point, all analyses in Phase 1 were combined regardless of the position of the respondent.

3.6.2 Section A: Demographic profile of the professional educators and rural lower primary schools who participated in the investigation

Section A of the questionnaire comprises information describing the demographic profile of the school principals and teachers participated in the study. The demographic information of the participant sample (n = 146) is shown as frequencies and percentages in Table 3.3. The ages of respondents varied between 24 and 59 years, with the majority of participants being between 40 and 49 years old, and the next largest group between 30 and 39 years old. Twenty seven (18.49%) of the remaining participants' were 50 years old or above. Eight (5.47%) participants' ages varied between 24 and 29 years. Two participants did not indicate their ages. Of 146 respondents, 86 were females and 59 were males.

Approximately nine languages are taught in Namibian schools. The dominant language in the region in which the research was conducted is Oshiwambo. All but five of the respondents reported Oshiwambo as their mother tongue. The remaining five reported Silozi (3), Otjiherero (1) and Other (1) specified as Subiya.

Possible qualifications include certificates (two-year or three-year (16%), bachelor or honour degrees (three-year or four-year) and postgraduate degrees (five-year minimum (15%). The most frequently reported qualification was the three-year certificate (66%). The postgraduate degree had the lowest response (3%). Nine (9) respondents provided no answer to this item. Respondents were asked to write the number of years that they have practiced the teaching profession. This included the principals as well as the teachers. Respondents' years in the teaching profession ranged from 1 to 35, with a wide range of years among the respondents. Ten participants did not respond to this question.

TABLE 3.3: Demographic profile of the professional educators

Characteristic	Group	Frequency*	Percentage
Age	50 and older	27	19
	40 – 49	69	48
	30 – 39	40	28
	24 – 29	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>
	Total	144*	100
Gender	Female	86	59
	Male	<u>59</u>	<u>41</u>
	Total	145*	100
Mother Tongue	Oshiwambo	141	96.57
	Silozi	3	2.05
	Otjiherero	1	0.68
	Other	<u>1</u>	<u>0.68</u>
	Total	146	100.00
Professional Qualification	2-year certificate	22	16
	3-year certificate	91	66
	3/4-year bachelor/ honours	20	15
	5-year postgraduate	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
	Total	137*	100
Number of Years in the Teaching Profession	1- 10	42	31
	11- 20	56	41
	21- 30	31	23
	31- 35	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>
	Total	136*	100

*Frequencies may not sum to 146 because of non-responses.

- Professional educators' description of schools
 - Number of learners and teachers per school:

With respect to the number of learners at each school (question 2.1), 143 out of 146 responded to this item. The data indicate 43 as the lowest and 960 as the highest numbers of learners per school. The smallest school has one teacher and the largest has 28 teachers (question 2.3).

- Basic need facilities

The data indicate that among the listed facilities (question 2.6) toilets/latrines were the most available facilities at most schools. Electricity and telephones were the least available facilities at many schools. Although the data indicate the availability of piped water in Ohangwena region schools, the rate of the score is low in terms of the importance of this human basic need and therefore, the data shows a lack of clean water in many schools.

- Respondents' description of the community

According to the responses to question 2.7, 127 (88.82%) of professional educators indicate that most of Ohangwena region communities' living standard ranges from a poor to acceptable living standard. Only 10 (6.99%) regard the communities' living standard as very poor while 6 (4.20%) consider it good. Three respondents provided no answer to this item.

- Professional educators' perception regarding the functions of Teacher-Parent Organisation

Only 22 (15.38%) professional educators indicated "yes" to the question as whether their schools have a Teacher-Parent Organisation (question 2.8). One hundred and twenty-one (84.62%) professional educators indicated a "no" answer. Three professional educators did not provide answer to this item. Fifteen professional educators responded to the follow-up question which asked the functions of the Teacher-Parent Organisation. All responses from the 15 people were combined and grouped into 4 categories. Nine professional educators indicate that one of the least functions of a Teacher-Parent Organisation (question 2.9) is to present parents with activities which contribute to the promotion of a good relationship between the school and the home/community (137 did not respond to this item). Four respondents indicate that discipline, health and the counselling of staff members and learners were functions of the Teacher-Parent Organisation (142 did not respond to this item). The functions the Teacher-Parent Organisation performs the most often include activities which contribute to the development of school management and quality assurance (9 responded and 137 did not respond) to school infrastructure developments (15 responded and 131 did not respond to this item).

- Professional educators' perception regarding the functions of the school board

Questions 2.10 - 2.12 (Section A) of the questionnaire asked professional educators to indicate the following: functions of the School Board (2.10); three aspects individual professional educators (themselves) would like to focus on regarding the involvement of parents in Grade 1-3 learners' academic education (2.11); and three aspects the professional educators would like parents to focus

on regarding the Grade 1-3 learners' academic education (2.12). Again, all responses to each question were combined and grouped, and categories were created from the data to integrate the same responses from different professional educators, and which indicated one or more related idea(s). Four categories were created to include all responses to question 2.10; three categories were created to include responses to question 2.11 and 2.12 each.

The responses (118) show that school boards mostly manage schools. However, the controlling of discipline and security safeguarding appear prominent in professional educators' responses (137). Management in the responses of both groups (School board and Teacher-Parent Organisation) mentioned functions.

- Professional educators' perception on the three aspects on which they would like to focus regarding the involvement of parents in the academic education of Grade 1 to 3 learners

Fifty point four five percent (50%) of the professional educators who were asked to name three aspects that they would like to focus on regarding the involvement of parents in the academic education of Grade 1-3 learners. They indicated that they would like to focus on participation and support. Twenty-nine (29%) percent indicated that they would like to focus on communication and good relationships while 21% indicated that it would be important to them to link family to community resources. However, the data indicates that they would like to focus more on making parents participate in and support school activities.

- Professional educators' perception on the three aspects they would like parents to focus on regarding the academic education of Grade 1 to 3 learners

Question 2.12 of the questionnaire asked professional educators to name three aspects they would like parents to focus on regarding the academic education of learners. The data shows that 45 of them would like parents to focus on assisting in school activities (101 did not respond to this item). Others, 126 would like parents to focus on provision of children's needs (20 did not respond to this item). A small number (44) of professional educators feel school-parent relationships should also be a focus of parents (102 did not respond to this item).

Responses indicate that assistance support and relationships are regarded as the focus for principals and teachers, as they are repeated in what principals and teachers want parents to focus on. This is a clear indication of an important focus of schools as far as involvement is concerned.

3.6.3 Section B: Rural lower primary schools’ practices of parental involvement

The schools’ practices of parental involvement were sought through requesting respondents to indicate the extent to which the statements describe the climate of their schools (questions 3.1-3.5); the extent to which statements represent what their schools do regarding the participation of parents in educational opportunities (questions 4.1, 4.3-4.7); the extent to which their schools make use of community resources (social capital in the community) (questions 5.1-5.4); how often the statements indicate what happens at their schools (question 6.1-6.2, 6.4-6.6); the extent to which their schools make use of the indicated communication options (questions 7.1-7.8); and the extent to which their schools involve parents in school policy formulations (question 8.5).

3.6.3.1 Professional educators’ perceptions of schools’ climate to parental involvement

Figure 3.1 below in general shows that professional educators see their school climate as inviting. Safety (item 3.2: 40% indicated always, and 38% indicated most of the time), and cleanliness and maintenance (item 3.1: 54% indicated most of the time) are in evidence as strengths in most of the schools. As well, parents’ freedom to visit at any time of the day (item 3.5: 44% - always) is thought to be in keeping with most of the schools. However, in regards to what the school directly does to make parents feel welcome, there appear to be some deficiencies. Schools are only slightly more likely than not to show appreciation to parents (item 3.4: 38% - sometimes, and 35% - most of the time) and 88% of the professional educators indicate that their schools never provide snacks and drinks during parent-teacher meetings (item 3.3).

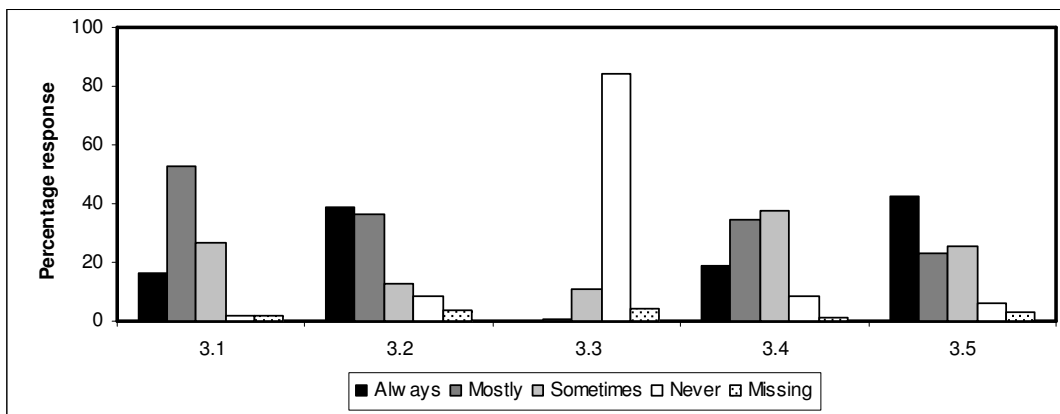


FIGURE 3.1: Professional educators’ perceptions of schools’ climate to parental involvement.

3.6.3.2 Professional educators’ perceptions of school’s provision for parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement

Table 3.4 below shows that, in practice, schools seem to give the most of their efforts toward organising meetings in which the importance of involvement is discussed with parents (item 4.1: 46.58% indicated always, and 37.67% indicated most of the time). The next most effort seems to be toward providing counselling opportunities for parents of children with behavioural problems (item 4.7: 33.56% indicated most of the time, and 23.97% indicated always). Responses are more ambivalent on discussing the contents and philosophy of the curriculum (item 4.3: 25.34% - most of the time, 37.67% - sometimes, and 18.49% - never), providing workshops for making parents understand their roles, rights and responsibilities (item 4.4: 28.77% - most of the time, 30.82% - sometimes, and 27.4% - never) and organising counselling opportunities for parents of children with specific learning needs (item 4.6: 37.67% - sometimes, and 21.92% - most of the time). Schools are deficient on question 4.5. Although 3.42%, 17.81% and 21.92% of the schools indicated that they always, most of the time and sometimes respectively offer parent lessons, eighty-one (55.48%) professional educators indicated that their schools never offered parent literacy lessons.

TABLE 3.4: Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools provide parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement

Statement	N	No response		Never		Sometimes		Most of the time		Always	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
4.1 Our school organises meetings in which teachers discuss the importance of involvement with parents.	146	2	1.37	6	4.11	15	10.27	55	37.67	68	46.58
4.2 Our school experiences at least 50% parent attendance at parent teacher meetings.	146	4	2.74	5	3.42	35	30.82	53	36.3	39	26.71
4.3 The contents and philosophy of the curriculum of specific subjects are discussed at the parents' meetings.	146	4	2.74	27	18.49	55	37.67	37	25.34	23	15.75
4.4 Our school organises workshops in which parents are made to understand their roles, rights and responsibilities in terms of their children's academic education.	146	2	1.37	40	27.4	45	30.82	42	28.77	17	11.64



4.5 Our school offers parents literacy lessons in which parents are guided on what they should do when assisting their children in reading, writing and computation at home.	146	2	1.37	81	55.48	32	21.92	26	17.81	5	3.42
4.6 Our school organises counselling opportunities for parents of children with specific learning needs.	146	2	1.37	33	22.6	55	37.67	32	21.92	24	16.44
4.7 Our school organises counselling opportunities for parents of children with behaviour problems.	146	2	1.37	16	10.96	44	30.14	49	33.56	35	23.97

3.6.3.3 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools make use of community resources

Professional educators gave the use of community resources a very low score overall: Aspects such as the use of elderly community members (indicated by 54.79%) and utility of professional health workers (indicated by 45.89%) were never done by many schools. However, to the use of community members as interpreters, responses split equally: Forty nine professional educators (33.56%) say they never use community members as interpreters, 49 (33.56%) professional educators always do it, 20 (13.69%) do it most of the time and 26 (17.80%) do it sometimes. In the area of inviting the community for fund raising, responses are more equally split across all categories: Thirty five professional educators (23.97%) do it always, 36 (24.65%) do it most of the time, 45 (30.82%) do it sometimes and 30 (20.54%) never.

3.6.3.4 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools provide parents with opportunities for technical support for classroom activities

Figure 3.2 below presents both the practices of teachers and the practices of schools. Responses on teachers’ practices show that teachers are not likely to make parental involvement part of their regular teaching (item 6.1: 52% indicated sometimes), or ask parents to do lesson demonstrations (item 6.2: 43% indicated sometimes, and 45% indicated never). However, there were mixed responses on inviting parents to observe teaching in progress (item 6.5: 33% indicated always, 24% indicated most of the time, and 26% indicated sometimes). From the schools, mixed responses were also reported on including parent volunteers in preparation of fundraising (item 6.6: 26% indicated always, 23% indicated sometimes, and 32% indicated never). However, 43% of the schools always ask parents to support and monitor learners’ home work activities (6.4).

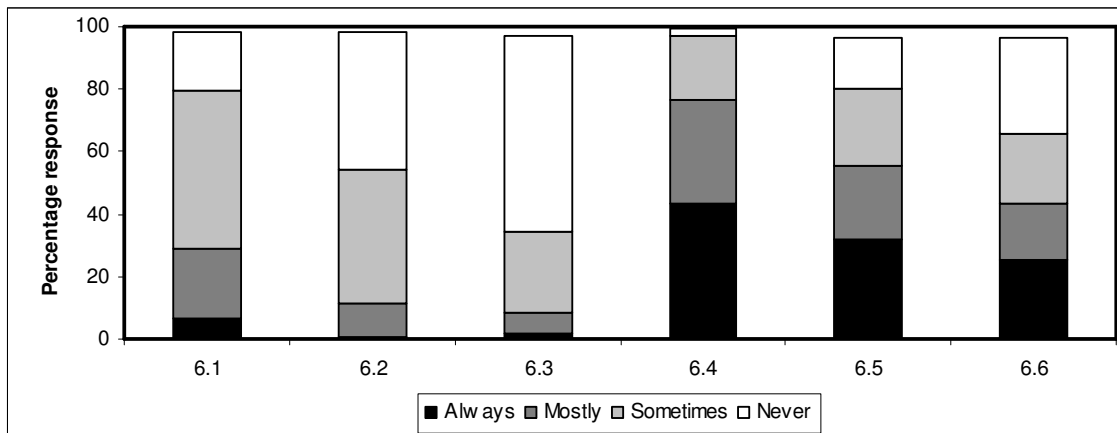


FIGURE 3.2: Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools provide parents with opportunities for technical support for classroom activities.

3.6.3.5 Professional educators’ perceptions of how schools make use of communication options

The results show that letter writing (50.68% of the responses indicated always, 29.45% indicated most of the time, 11.64% indicated sometimes); meetings (36.98% indicated always, 41.09% indicated most of the time, 17.12% indicated sometimes, 3.42% indicated never); and parents’ days (24.65% indicated always, 26.71% indicated most of the time, 23.28% indicated sometimes) are the communication options schools favour using to contact parents. Conversely, the use of telephone (72.60% indicated never, 4.79% indicated always,) home-school diaries (56.16% indicated never, 2.73% indicated always,) and home visits (46.57% indicated never, 2.05% indicated always) were the communication options many schools never use.

TABLE 3.5: Professional educators’ perceptions of the extent to which schools make use of communication options

Statement	N	No response		Never		Sometimes		Most of the time		Always	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
7.1 Our school organises meetings to provide information on school policies, regulations, mission statements and goals.	146	2	1.37	5	3.42	25	17.12	60	41.1	54	6.99
7.2 Individual parent-teacher meetings provide the school with valuable information about learners’ conditions and backgrounds.	146	4	2.74	17	11.64	39	26.71	49	33.56	37	25.34
7.3 We write informative and encouraging letters to parents whose children are performing poorly.	146	2	1.37	15	10.27	42	28.77	41	28.08	46	31.51
7.4 Our school sends letters to parents which serve as effective means of getting many of them to attend meetings.	146	3	2.05	9	6.16	17	11.64	43	29.45	74	50.68
7.5 The telephone is one of the means our school uses to communicate to parents.	146	4	2.74	106	72.6	20	13.7	9	6.16	7	4.79
7.6 Parents are invited to parents’ days with the aim of reviewing and discussing learners’ academic work.	146	6	4.11	31	21.23	34	23.29	39	26.71	36	24.66
7.7 Our school uses home visits as opportunities for parents to discuss their concerns about their children on a one- to- one basis with teachers.	146	2	1.37	68	46.58	56	38.36	17	11.64	3	2.05
7.8 Home school diaries are used to communicate regular school programmes the school uses.	146	6	4.11	82	56.16	32	21.92	22	15.07	4	2.74

3.6.3.6 Professional educators' perceptions of how schools involve parents in decision-making and power-sharing activities

The professional educators' responses on the extent to which schools share power and decision making in activities that promote education of learners show that schools (76.71%) always make parents members of school boards (item 8.1); and schools always (41.78%) and most of the time (30.82%) are likely to involve parents on school improvement committees (item 8.2). As to parents as represented in learners' code of conduct development committee (item 8.3: 30.82% indicated never, 27.4% indicated most of the time) and homework policy development committees (item 8.4: 32.19% indicated never, and 32.19% indicated most of the time), respondents reported mixed levels of involvement. On seeking for parents' critical comments on school policies (item 8.5), respondents split into nearly equal numbers for all categories (26.71% indicated always, 26.03% indicated most of the time, 20.55% indicated sometimes, and 24.66% indicated never).

3.6.4 Section C: Rural lower primary schools' attitudes towards parental involvement

The professional educators' attitudes towards parental involvement were sought through requesting them to indicate the extent to which they agree with statements which represent their sentiments (question 9) and describe their thoughts (question 10).

3.6.4.1 Professional educators' sentiments towards parental involvement

Professional educators seem to see parental involvement with learners as contributing to the quality of education in schools. They either strongly agree or agree with the statements that say: an important way to improve the quality of education in schools is to involve parents in school activities (85.62% - strongly agree and 12.33% agree); involvement of parents in learners' learning activities reduces the feeling of alienation between schools and parents (41.1% - strongly agree and 32.88% agree); and parents' support and monitoring of homework activities cultivate and promote the daily habit of completing homework (56.85% strongly agree and 36.99% agree). There are no disagreements indicated about the first statement (that parental involvement improves the quality of education in schools). However, responses indicated disagreements on the last two statements (involvement reduces the feeling of alienation (10.96% disagree and 10.27% strongly disagree).

The contribution of parents to the administrative level was shown by professional educators' responses that strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statements such as:

parents have a right to contribute to the decisions that affect their children’s education (70.55% - strongly agree, 24.66% - agree, 2.05% - disagree and no strongly disagreements were indicated); the distribution of school policies and rules enables parents to learn their rights and responsibilities in supporting their children’s education (62.33% - strongly agree, 32.88% - agree, 1.37% - disagree and 0.68% strongly disagree); schools should allow parents to carefully examine and constructively question the practices of schools (38.36% - strongly agree, 44.52% - agree, 8.22% - disagree and 4.79% strongly disagree); and schools should allow parents to monitor teachers’ attendance (57.53% - strongly agree, 30.14% - agree, 6.85% - disagree and 1.37% - strongly disagree). The professional educators’ ‘strongly agree’ responses on statements that say no matter how qualified teachers are, they need parents’ support (77.4% - strongly agree and 17.81% agree. No disagreement was indicated to this statement) and parents’ feedback helps teachers learn their strengths and weaknesses (64.38% - strongly agree, 29.45% - agree, 0.68% - disagree and 0.68 – strongly disagree) is an evidence of perceptions that show role of parents in actively contributing to the classroom level.

TABLE 3.6: Description of professional educators’ sentiments towards parental involvement

Statement	No response			Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
9.1 An important way to improve the quality of education in schools is to involve parents in school activities.	146	3	2.05	0	0	0	0	18	12.33	125	85.62
9.2 No matter how qualified teachers are, they need parents’ support.	146	5	3.42	2	1.37	0	0	26	17.81	113	77.4
9.3 Parents have a right to contribute to the decisions that affect their children’s education.	146	4	2.74	0	0	3	2.05	36	24.66	103	70.55
9.4 The distribution of school policies and rules enables parents to learn their rights and responsibilities in supporting their children’s education.	146	4	2.74	1	0.68	2	1.37	48	32.88	91	62.33
9.5 Involvement of parents in learners’ learning activities reduces the feeling of alienation between schools and parents.	146	7	4.79	15	10.27	16	10.96	48	32.88	60	41.1
9.6 Schools should allow parents to											



carefully examine and constructively question the practices of schools.	146	6	4.11	7	4.79	12	8.22	65	44.52	56	38.36
9.7 Schools should allow parents to monitor teachers' attendance.	146	6	4.11	2	1.37	10	6.85	44	30.14	84	57.53
9.8 Parents' feedback helps teachers learn their strengths and weaknesses.	146	7	4.79	1	0.68	1	0.68	43	29.45	94	64.38
9.9 Parents' support and monitoring of homework activities cultivate and promote the daily habit of completing homework.	146	6	4.11	2	1.37	1	0.68	54	36.99	83	56.85
9.10 Home visits give teachers a chance to develop an awareness and understanding of learners' backgrounds and life styles.	146	4	2.74	2	1.37	3	2.05	37	25.34	100	68.49

3.6.4.2 Professional educators' opinions regarding parental involvement

Most of the schools (64.38%) disagree with a question that says teachers are skilled enough to take care of all learners' needs, therefore, they do not need parental support. Professional educators' perceptions on how much parents assist with homework, as well as whether parents have unique skills to assist the learners, are almost equally split between agreement and disagreement. Thirty four point ninety three percentages (34.93%) and 30.13% of the professional educators agree and disagree respectively to the statement that says parents do not assist their children with homework activities. Thirty seven point sixty seven (37.67%) and 30.82% of the professional educators agree and disagree respectively to the statement that says that parents in rural have unique skills and knowledge to assist in their children's academic learning.

3.6.5 Section D: Barriers to parental involvement in rural lower primary schools

The answer to this question was sought through asking professional educators to indicate the extent to which the statements describe the barriers their schools experience (question 11).

3.6.5.1 Professional educators' indications of barriers to parental involvement that are experienced at their schools

The responses indicate that the barriers that were mostly experienced at their schools include unawareness and lack of understanding of parents about the fact that they also have a share in formal education of their children (20.55% – often, 44.52% - sometimes, 14.38% - seldom,

15.75%), parents' fear for responsibilities (8.9% - often, 42.47% - sometimes, 17.81% - seldom, 26.03 - never), parents' lack of confidence (28.08% - often, 41.78% - sometimes, 16.44% - seldom, 8.22% - never), illiteracy (21.92% - often, 36.3% - sometimes, 32.19% - seldom, 3.42% - never) and lack of time (14.38% - often, 33.56% - sometimes, 32.19% - seldom, 15.75% - never) on the side of parents were indicated as barriers they experience either seldom or sometimes. Barrier, which were least experienced were teachers' inability to involve parents due to lack of initial training (56.85% - never, 13.7% - seldom, 21.92% - sometimes, 2.74% - often); teachers not being sure of what to involve parents in (51.37% - never, 18.49% - seldom, 22.6% - sometimes, 2.74% often); teachers' lack of understanding about the value of family support (47.26% - never, 17.81% - seldom, 21.23% - sometimes, 8.9% - often) and teachers' attempts to avoid scrutiny from parents (54.79% - never, 12.33% - seldom, 18.49% - sometimes, 5.48% - often).

TABLE 3.7: Barriers to parental involvement that are experienced at rural lower primary schools

Statement	N	No response		Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
11.1 Parents avoid contacting the school because they fear being put into positions of authority and responsibility.	146	7	4.79	38	26.03	26	17.81	62	42.47	13	8.9
11.2 Most parents in this community are unable to read and/or write.	146	9	6.16	5	3.42	47	32.19	53	36.3	32	21.92
11.3 Parents feel that formal education is the school's responsibility alone.	146	7	4.79	23	15.75	21	14.38	65	44.52	30	20.55
11.4 Teachers do not involve parents because they had never been taught the benefits of parent involvement.	146	7	4.79	83	56.85	20	13.7	32	21.92	4	2.74
11.5 Teachers do not involve parents because they are not sure of what to involve parents in.	146	7	4.79	75	51.37	27	18.49	33	22.6	4	2.74
11.6 Parents are grappling with problems of survival and have little time and energy for school involvement.	146	6	4.11	23	15.75	47	32.19	49	33.56	21	14.38
11.7 Lack of confidence among parents prevents them from becoming involved in school's academic work.	146	8	5.48	12	8.22	24	16.44	61	41.78	41	28.08

11.8 Teachers do not understand the value of family support.	146	7	4.79	69	47.26	26	17.81	31	21.23	13	8.9
11.9 Teachers try to avoid parents' scrutiny.	146	13	8.9	80	54.79	18	12.33	27	18.49	8	5.48

3.6.6 Interpretation of the results of phase 1 of the study: quantitative

Although half of the professional educators (50%) indicate that they encourage parents to support school activities, the majority did not have any suggestions of the exact academic education activities on which they would like parents to focus.

The fact that professional educators singled out relationships as the important aspect of involvement they would like to focus on suggests the possibility of their intention for working together with parents to implement necessary changes in schools. According to Warren (2005), a strong relationship between schools, parents and community members allows schools to develop a common vision for school reform. Moreover, strong relationships serve as evidence that schools see parents as partners in the provision of services, and not just as their recipients.

The results indicate that schools make efforts to create and maintain cleaner and better looking sites. The professional educators create an open, warm, inviting and productive climate and ensure security on the playgrounds. Warren (2005) and Beck and Murphy (1999) contend that schools which create an open, accepting, respectful culture and environment, and safe grounds for children when they are not in classrooms make their school climate inviting for parental involvement. The same researchers argue that if parents feel welcome at school, they believe that they develop a sense of belonging and they might end up offering suggestions and ideas that would be acted upon by the schools. This sense of being part of the school encourages parents to feel more comfortable about entering the classroom and rendering support even when they have not been formally invited.

Schools experience acceptable and fair attendance of meetings and workshops for parents' educational purposes where the discussions focus on importance of parental involvement, philosophy of the curriculum of specific subjects, parents' roles, rights and responsibilities in terms of their children's academic education and counselling for parents of children with specific learning and behavioural problems. Activities such as subject-specific information and training for families, as well as workshops, have a positive influence on families' interests in their children's education which helps parents who would not otherwise have done so to become involved. These services

instill confidence and pride in parents and increase their sense of efficacy for supporting their children's education. Nevertheless, the fact that many schools never offer literacy classes to parents is a challenge facing rural schools. Rural schools are in a unique position to address the concerns of uninvolved parents by establishing literacy programs and practices that target to prepare, empower and encourage all parents to participate in their children's education. It is Warren's (2005) and Sanders and Epstein's (1998) argument that when parents are provided with parenting education and subject-specific training by educators, they become more effective in teaching and tutoring their children.

Although communities contain rich cultural traditions and social resources that have much to offer the work of schools, and may serve as an important supporter of home and school by making beneficial services available to children and families, and by providing a context supportive of educational endeavours, most professional educators indicate that schools either do not really or sufficiently engage community resources in their school lives. Warren (2005) strongly believes that when parents and community members are engaged in the life of the school, they can support teaching and strengthen the environment for learning. Nevertheless, a number of schools who recognise the resources available within the community ask community members to interpret for parents when the language of the meeting is not understood by parents. Beck and Murphy (1999) recommend the use of interpreters because the obvious expertise of teachers and their use of professional words and phrases are unfamiliar to most parents and inhibit the parents' ability to become involved in powerful conversations with teachers about classroom practices and learners. Therefore, the professional educators' positive perceptions of schools' use of community members as interpreters is a symbol of respect, true value of parents' presence and an attempt for better communication and understanding of each other (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005).

The results reveal that there is insufficiency of involving parents in lesson demonstrations, material donations for teaching, and preparation of fund-raising activities. However, the data indicate less opposition to involving parents in supporting and monitoring learners' homework activities and observing teaching in progress. Lopez et al. (in Lee & Bowen, 2006) argue that insufficient effort to involve parents at school does not mean that parents lack the capacity to provide adequate home learning environments for children or that they are not involved in their children's schooling at home. This means that by making parent involvement part of their regular teaching practice, schools make parents increase their interactions with their children at home. Supporting and monitoring their children's homework could also have a direct impact on learners' learning. Nevertheless, Carreon, Drake and Barton (2005) and Sanders and Epstein (1998) argue that the parents who

volunteer in classrooms learn more about the teacher's job and problems, and about the classroom life of a child. As a result, they find it easier to talk to teachers and ask questions. Therefore, schools' increased efforts to make parents demonstrate lessons, design and/or donate materials for teaching and include parents in preparation of fund-raising need to be taken seriously and advance the level of involvement of families.

The results present evidence that to a certain extent, schools communicate with parents. According to Lee and Bowen (2006) communication is one of the best opportunities schools use for the encouragement of parents and for accessing information and resources for supporting homework and other school activities. As shown by the data, many schools always use a traditional, yet effective, communication method (letter writing) to invite parents to meetings and for informing parents about their children's performances. Most of the time schools organise meetings (individual or group) for discussions about school policies, regulations, goals and learners' conditions and backgrounds. The teacher-parent meeting is one of the strategies schools use most of the time to directly meet with parents and make them raise concerns and offer ideas about school improvements and making schools better places for children's learning. It is hoped that schools use this method to create a platform for professional educators and parents to better understand each other, and work collaboratively for learners' holistic development. This interpretation is based on Sanders and Epstein's (1998) findings that learners benefit holistically when they see that their parents and teachers know and respect one another and communicate regularly. It is obvious schools in rural areas use communication methods that are not too burdensome on teachers and parents. The schools' use of these communication options (meetings, letters and parent days) indicates their recognition of parents' rights to be involved in the education of their children. Moreover, the schools show their determination to advance their goals regarding the education of learners.

The results indicate that lower primary schools in Ohangwena region make it possible for parents to have a hand in broad-based participation in school decision-making. This interpretation is based on the evidence consistently revealed by the data that parents participate in school boards and other school development committees. Through participating in decision making and other school development committees, parents speak up, are listened to and help make decisions that in ways positively influence and shape learning and teaching (Warren, 2005; Beck & Murphy, 1999).

The responses of professional educators indicate openness in their views and attitudes towards involving and interacting with parents in school activities for the enhancement of learners' learning.

Their attitudes reflect a belief that parents should be involved in the decision-making processes. The fact that professional educators have a strong belief against ‘teacher - as - expert’ (Epstein et al., 2002) and therefore, do not need parental support, create an equality rather than a hierarchy of knowledge, value and status that influences their collaboration with parents as equals in the process of educating children. Their attitudes reflect that they operate from within a culture of democracy, which fosters a curriculum and pedagogy that promote harmony and cooperation between schools and parents. Many of the attitudes and opinions of the professional educators show respect and value of the contributions of the parents as they see them (parents) as people with the power to monitor their (educators) attendance and people whose contributions can improve professional educators’ weaknesses and can develop an awareness and understanding of the backgrounds and life styles of learners.

The results clearly show that although schools attempt to collaborate with families, there are deeply ingrained stumbling blocks that need to be addressed for good collaboration to advance. These include parents’ lack of understanding and confidence, fear of responsibilities, insufficient responses to parents’ meetings and other educational training opportunities, insufficient involvement of parents in classroom activities and unavailability of literacy lessons for parents at schools. These barriers should not be accepted without any attempt to overcome them. The argument is that the measure of a school’s commitment to equalising power relationships is not the absence of struggles in this effort, but rather the way in which professional educators and parents address problems and persist in spite of them.

Although Phase 1 results revealed the practices of schools towards parental involvement in terms of providing parents with avenues to develop as leaders, engaging parents in authentic conversations such as counselling, and facilitating the support parents give their children at home, an in-depth understanding of parental involvement requires the study of involvement from the perspective of parents and would be enhanced by finding the rationales that motivate, sustain and/or inhibit these practices from both parents and professional educators. In Phase 2 of this study the parents’ and professional educators’ reasoning for their involvement practices was investigated.

3.6.7 Identification of the rural lower primary schools with high, intermediate and low parental involvement

Extreme case sampling was used to select cases (schools with high, average and low involvement) from extremes and then to study them in depth in Phase 2 of the study. Extreme case sampling provides rich sources of information (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Therefore, schools for Phase 2 of the study were identified based on their level of parental involvement. The identification process was done according to the following criteria:

- The average response/scores for questions 3-8 (section B) were used as a measure of parental involvement practised by the school
- The responses/scores for the principal and/or teachers at each school were used to calculate the average for each school
- Questions 5.3 and 10.3 were excluded from this average because statistical evidence of a significant association between the responses and the position of professional educators was found on this item, and this could ‘bias’ the averages for schools where there were not responses from one principal and one teacher as requested.
- Responses to the items in scales 3 through 8 were averaged to create the combined scores of the respondents on the data collection instrument and the schools were ranked from highest to lowest average parental involvement score (see Table 3.8 below).
- The parental involvement scores were ordered so that they could be categorised into ‘high,’ ‘intermediate’ and ‘low’ levels of parental involvement.

Three levels of parental involvement practice were indicated. Two schools from each level were selected for interviews and further investigation in the qualitative part (Phase 2) of the study. A list of schools’ parental involvement practice scores is shown in Table 3.8 below.

TABLE 3.8: Parental involvement practice scores per school

School	N	Mean	Median	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum	
38	1	3.2941	3.2941	.	3.29	3.29	1
74	1	3.1765	3.1765	.	3.18	3.18	2
44	2	3.0735	3.0735	0.19	2.94	3.21	3
28	2	3.0588	3.0588	0.75	2.53	3.59	4
46	3	3.0037	3.0294	0.04	2.95	3.03	5
52	2	2.9706	2.9706	0.17	2.85	3.09	6
59	2	2.9706	2.9706	0.00	2.97	2.97	7
15	3	2.9210	2.9394	0.03	2.88	2.94	8
19	1	2.9118	2.9118	.	2.91	2.91	9
54	1	2.9118	2.9118	.	2.91	2.91	10
66	1	2.9118	2.9118	.	2.91	2.91	11
24	2	2.9108	2.9108	0.08	2.85	2.97	12
31	2	2.9006	2.9006	0.48	2.56	3.24	13
62	2	2.8824	2.8824	0.21	2.74	3.03	14
77	1	2.8824	2.8824	.	2.88	2.88	15
83	2	2.8485	2.8485	0.21	2.70	3.00	16
25	2	2.8382	2.8382	0.19	2.71	2.97	17
33	2	2.7739	2.7739	0.05	2.74	2.81	18
53	2	2.7206	2.7206	0.23	2.56	2.88	19
87	1	2.7059	2.7059	.	2.71	2.71	20
32	2	2.6912	2.6912	0.40	2.41	2.97	21
61	3	2.6895	2.5588	0.59	2.18	3.33	22
57	1	2.6667	2.6667	.	2.67	2.67	23
23	2	2.6618	2.6618	0.19	2.53	2.79	24
51	1	2.6471	2.6471	.	2.65	2.65	25
78	1	2.6471	2.6471	.	2.65	2.65	26
29	2	2.6386	2.6386	0.30	2.42	2.85	27
20	1	2.6364	2.6364	.	2.64	2.64	28
73	1	2.6364	2.6364	.	2.64	2.64	29
85	2	2.6212	2.6212	0.02	2.61	2.64	30
47	2	2.6176	2.6176	0.33	2.38	2.85	31
34	2	2.6110	2.6110	0.09	2.55	2.68	32
41	1	2.5882	2.5882	.	2.59	2.59	33
68	1	2.5882	2.5882	.	2.59	2.59	34
88	1	2.5882	2.5882	.	2.59	2.59	35
13	1	2.5588	2.5588	.	2.56	2.56	36
71	1	2.5588	2.5588	.	2.56	2.56	37



4	2	2.5294	2.5294	0.62	2.09	2.97	38
18	1	2.5152	2.5152	.	2.52	2.52	39
55	1	2.5000	2.5000	.	2.50	2.50	40
42	2	2.4559	2.4559	0.10	2.38	2.53	41
82	2	2.4559	2.4559	0.02	2.44	2.47	42
56	1	2.4545	2.4545	.	2.45	2.45	43
35	2	2.4528	2.4528	0.47	2.12	2.79	44
12	2	2.4340	2.4340	0.11	2.35	2.52	45
10	2	2.4323	2.4323	0.05	2.39	2.47	46
7	2	2.4314	2.4314	0.14	2.33	2.53	47
69	1	2.4242	2.4242	.	2.42	2.42	48
72	1	2.4118	2.4118	.	2.41	2.41	49
6	2	2.4086	2.4086	0.54	2.03	2.79	50
22	1	2.3824	2.3824	.	2.38	2.38	51
43	2	2.3676	2.3676	0.64	1.91	2.82	52
5	2	2.3529	2.3529	0.87	1.74	2.97	53
40	1	2.3529	2.3529	.	2.35	2.35	54
80	1	2.3529	2.3529	.	2.35	2.35	55
36	2	2.3485	2.3485	0.28	2.15	2.55	56
67	2	2.3378	2.3378	0.52	1.97	2.71	57
70	2	2.3235	2.3235	0.33	2.09	2.56	58
65	4	2.3220	2.2206	0.55	1.79	3.06	59
14	3	2.3101	2.1471	0.48	1.93	2.85	60
58	1	2.2941	2.2941	.	2.29	2.29	61
17	3	2.2858	2.1515	0.51	1.85	2.85	62
26	2	2.2843	2.2843	0.07	2.24	2.33	63
30	2	2.2821	2.2821	0.14	2.18	2.38	64
79	1	2.2813	2.2813	.	2.28	2.28	65
8	3	2.2659	2.5294	0.49	1.71	2.56	66
3	2	2.2353	2.2353	0.42	1.94	2.53	67
9	2	2.1818	2.1818	0.21	2.03	2.33	68
76	1	2.1515	2.1515	.	2.15	2.15	69
1	2	2.1439	2.1439	0.50	1.79	2.50	70
16	2	2.1029	2.1029	0.02	2.09	2.12	71
48	2	2.0996	2.0996	0.22	1.94	2.26	72
2	1	2.0882	2.0882	.	2.09	2.09	73
84	1	2.0588	2.0588	.	2.06	2.06	74
39	1	2.0294	2.0294	.	2.03	2.03	75
86	1	2.0294	2.0294	.	2.03	2.03	76
37	2	1.9892	1.9892	0.60	1.57	2.41	77

50	2	1.9840	1.9840	0.11	1.91	2.06	78
27	2	1.9559	1.9559	0.60	1.53	2.38	79
49	2	1.9559	1.9559	0.06	1.91	2.00	80
63	2	1.9559	1.9559	0.02	1.94	1.97	81
21	1	1.9118	1.9118	.	1.91	1.91	82
75	1	1.9118	1.9118	.	1.91	1.91	83
60	1	1.8824	1.8824	.	1.88	1.88	84
11	2	1.7647	1.7647	0.04	1.74	1.79	85
45	2	1.7647	1.7647	0.04	1.74	1.79	86
81	1	1.6176	1.6176	.	1.62	1.62	87
64	2	1.5735	1.5735	0.19	1.44	1.71	88

The findings summarised here point to the need of further inquiry. The question, then, is why some schools manage to orchestrate higher involvement than others in the Ohangwena region. The claim, on the basis of literature reviewed (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005), is that higher involvement is the result of all stakeholders’ positive attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and process in which schools and parents interact, using specific forms of capital, to truly improve the school experiences of learners. The explanations of professional educators of their attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, processes and circumstances lead to this outcome were explored in Phase 2 of this study and findings are presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

TABLE 3.9: Schools selected for phase 2 (qualitative) of the study

Low Parental involvement	Medium or Intermediate Parental involvement	High Parental involvement
64 (F)	35 (D)	44 (B)
11 (E)	12 (C)	28 (A)

3.7 CONCLUSION

This study investigated parental involvement in the academic education of their children in rural lower primary schools. Phase 1 of the study examined how and the extent to which rural lower primary schools in the Ohangwena region practice parental involvement. This phase further explored the perceptions and attitudes of school professional educators towards parental involvement. Barriers to the practice of parental involvement were also solicited.

Using a 59-item Likert-scaled instrument, a sample of 87 schools was surveyed. The results provided descriptions of activities schools execute as part of parental involvement practice, and the perceptions of professional educators which according to Charles-Welsh, Green and Howard (2004) can serve as a valuable reflection of parental involvement awareness and a valued contributing factor towards fostering the academic success of learners.

The results of Phase 1 fairly answered research questions 1 and 3 of the study (see section 1.3). The findings denote professional educators' positive perceptions of and experiences with parental involvement. Positive perception reveals a belief that the chances of success of learners in life is initiated by the home, and maximised when the home and the school are collaboratively involved in the child's education (Charles-Welsh, Green & Howard, 2004; Epstein et al. 2002).

Although professional educators indicate evidence of the attempts of schools to encourage the support of parents for the academic education of their children, the overall findings indicate that schools still need to take more effort to initiate and invite parents to participate in school academic activities such as monitoring learners' work at home, classroom teaching observation, and lesson demonstrations at schools. Parents have important roles to play in a complete education of their children as they serve as powerful forces in helping to shape the destiny and outcome of their children.

Moreover, the results reflect challenges schools experience in the process of implementing parental involvement. The overall underlying problem rests within the realm of the use of community resources. Apart from inviting community members for fund-raising events, many schools do not make use of community members and other resources to support learners' learning. These results will serve to influence the qualitative measures of Phase 2 of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS OF PHASE 2: QUALITATIVE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the use of qualitative methodology in Phase 2 of this study. It further presents the data collected through interviews, to investigate the processes and strategies used in the six identified lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region to implement parental involvement in academic education of learners. I was particularly interested in identifying the activities employed in rural lower primary schools' practice of parental involvement, and how professional educators build relationships between them and parents for the sake of promoting the academic education of learners. Therefore, in Section 4.4 I have reported on how parental involvement was perceived by professional educators; how schools organise their parental involvement strategies and activities meant for making parents participate in their children's academic education; barriers schools experience in the process of practising parental involvement in academic teaching of learners; and professional educators' attitudes towards involvement of parents in academic learning of children, and the support they are expected to provide to them. I also noted ways professional educators sought to overcome the barriers. Furthermore, views of parents towards involvement in their children's academic education are also presented in this chapter. At this Phase of the study (Phase 2), the term participant is used to refer to the principals, teachers and parents together. When reference is made of the principals and teachers alone, the term professional educators is used. Parents and/or guardians are referred to as parents in this chapter.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE STUDY

As indicated in 1.6 (chapter1) and 3.4 (chapter 3), this whole study is based on a combination of both the quantitative (Phase1) and qualitative (Phase 2) methodological approaches. Hence, the study has implemented a mixed method type research design. Research design indicates the way a researcher interprets and understands the world and associated rules of investigation to determine the research methodology. At Phase 2 of this study, I adopted an interpretive approach to explore

and explain the rural lower primary schools' practice of parental involvement in academic education of learners. I adopted interpretive approach because I believe that individuals construct meaning to their environment by experiencing the world from inside. Thus, this study's Phase 2 looked at different interpretations of reality among insiders ('emic perspective' (Patton, 1990: 241).

Researchers who accept anti-positivist epistemology usually use interpretive qualitative methodology to gain understanding of social reality (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Thus, in this study's context qualitative approach is better equipped to answer the question "How and why do principals, teachers and parents of rural lower primary schools in Namibia perceive, think about and practise involvement in the academic education of learners?" The main and sub-questions that formed the focus of Phase 2 of the study were presented in Chapter 1, Sub-section 1.3.

4.2.1 Data collection procedure

4.2.1.1 Sampling

For this phase of the study six schools (three units of analysis: schools A and B as high parental involvement; C and D as intermediate parental involvement; E and F as low parental involvement) were selected (see 3.6.7 for how the selection was done). Five interviewees: a principal, two teachers and two parents per school were selected. The concept 'parent' at this stage of the study refers to any family member (adult) whose child attends the selected schools. In total, 30 people were interviewed. Harry, Sturges and Klingner (2005) argue that a researcher achieves a more refined analysis of data with a small sample size, and reduces too much when striking a compromise between quality and quantity. Stake (2000) reasons that on representational grounds, even though the epistemological opportunity may seem small, one can learn some important things from almost any case. Therefore, I regard the possibility and opportunity to learn from a small sample of six schools not only, but also realistic of primary importance. The sample of parents consisted of one school board member and an ordinary parent.

Teachers and parents were identified with the assistance of the principals. Stratification of the participants (in terms of gender and age) was not considered because I observed, without any doubt that most of the teachers at lower primary phase are females. In this study, stratification sampling refers to drawing samples according to segments of a population such as gender and age characteristics (Strydom, 2005). This study's focus is on the lower primary phase as stated earlier,

and the majority of teachers at this level are females. Hence, sufficient representation of different genders and age among participants was not of significance for this study.

4.2.1.2 Data collection strategy: interviews

Although some researchers regard interview as the most expensive strategy of data collection, some deem it as one of the most effective instruments one can use to collect information about people's thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, likes and dislikes (Swarts, 1998). Moreover, Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) recommend interview as the most suitable technique for poor sectors of the population in less industrialised countries. Harry (2005) argues that researchers and participants misunderstand one another. Therefore, to minimise this possibility, two-way communication as the most basic form of human interaction was considered in this study. The analysis of this communication was a therefore justifiable basis from which I tried to understand this study's participants' activities and behaviours. Practical ways of managing the implementation of parental involvement and effective strategies of dealing with factors that affect teachers' efforts to involve parents are part of the information this study tried to produce. Hence, the interview is regarded as an effective method of collecting data on schools' process (and its particulars) of involving parents in the academic education of their children from educators for lower primary learners, especially in Namibia's rural areas (See Appendix E for interview questions).

- **One-on-one interview to collect data**

Interview is a meaning-making research process in which I was in conversation with individual research participants who were describing their experiences of parental involvement and reflecting on their descriptions. Individual interviews were preferred due to the belief that respondents would not be influenced by the perceptions and opinions of their colleagues and the outcome would be a more valid account of their own experiences (Henstrand, 2005).

- **Pair interviews to collect data**

According to Henstrand (2005), it could have been good if data collection of Phase 2 is done by individual interviews using a semi-structured interview constructed from questions raised by the literature and from both personal and professional experiences. However, four of the sample teachers preferred pair interviews. Teacher pair interviews were held at two of the six schools. The respondents argued that pair interviews provide a supportive atmosphere that encourages them to disclose attitudes and behaviour that they may not reveal in an individual interview.

4.2.1.3 Pilot application of the draft interviews

Since piloting of the process is part of the preparation, the quality of the preparation influences the quality of the data. Drawing upon Singleton et al. (cited by Strydom, 2005) the designed measuring instruments were tried out “on a small number of persons having characteristics similar to those of the target group of respondents” (Strydom, 2005: 206). Interview questions were tested on five people (Punch, 2005), one school principal, two teachers and two parents, to validate the content of the questions and to improve the clarity of the questions (Delpont, 2005).

4.2.1.4 Conducting the interviews

- **Participants**

The participants were six lower primary school principals, 12 lower primary education teachers (together referred to as professional educators in this study) at six selected schools and 12 parents (six parents whose children attend at the six selected schools and six parents who were members of school boards at those schools). The following tables (Tables 4.1 and 4.2) present the biographical data of the professional educators and parents respectively. Participants’ names were changed to ensure anonymity.

According to the following table (Table 4.1), 29 professional educators belonged to the same ethnic and cultural background. Only one teacher at C school (teacher Daan) belonged to a different ethnic group and cultural background. Fifteen professional educators live in the same communities as their schools and three do not live in the same communities as their schools.

TABLE 4.1: The biographical data of professional educators interviewed

Name	School	Position	Gender	Community member
Fudeni	A	Principal	Male	Yes
Shoye	A	Teacher	Female	Yes
Ina	A	Teacher	Female	Yes
Mkwana	B	Principal	Female	Yes
Line	B	Teacher	Female	Yes
Kali	B	Teacher	Male	Yes
Puni	C	Principal	Female	Yes
Shiwa	C	Teacher	Female	Yes
Daan	C	Teacher	Male	No
Shange	D	Principal	Male	Yes
Kajolo	D	Teacher	Female	Yes



Kandaha	D	Teacher	Female	Yes
Uusiku	E	Principal	Male	No
Rose	E	Teacher	Female	Yes
Lesheni	E	Teacher	Female	Yes
Kavena	F	Principal	Female	Yes
Bekky	F	Teacher	Female	No
Sheeli	F	Teacher	Female	Yes

The next table (Table 4.2) indicates biographical data of parents interviewed. The information in the table shows that from each school, one school board member and one ordinary parent have been interviewed. Nine of the interviewed parents were female whose ages ranged between 30 and 60 years old. Three interviewed parents were males and they were all above the age of 50 years.

TABLE 4.2: The biographical data of parents interviewed

Name	School	Age	Gender	Role at school
Kapau	A	32	Female	Ordinary Parent
Weyulu	A	52	Male	School Board member
Hambelela	B	47	Female	School Board Member
Namwenyo	B	42	Female	Ordinary Parent
Nepeti	C	42	Female	School Board Member
Kavisi	C	47	Female	Ordinary Parent
Tolina	D	48	Female	School Board Member
Ely	D	50+	Female	Ordinary Parent
Shingwena	E	45	Female	Ordinary Parent
Ndjedele	E	55	Male	School Board Member
Kornelius	F	53	Male	School Board Member
Nghitu	F	53	Female	Ordinary Parent

The data in both tables indicates that 73% of participants of Phase 2 are females and 27% are males.

- **The procedure followed in conducting the interviews**

Schools were first contacted either in person or telephonically to make appointments for interviews at a date and time convenient to the respondents. The interviews were done at the locations chosen by the principals but also convenient for the interviewees. Interviews at schools A, B, C and E were done in the principals' offices during break times (A, B and C) and immediately after school (E). These locations were therefore noisy. School D chose for the interviews to be done on a Sunday afternoon at the principal's house. School F chose a Saturday morning, and the interviews were done in my car. Four schools' (A, B, D and F) parents were interviewed in their homes. Two schools' (Schools C and E) parents were interviewed at schools. The parent interviews for School C took place on the day of a teacher parent meeting.

The purpose of the interview was explained at the beginning of each interview and permission was obtained to record the interviews. The principal and teacher interviews lasted for 30 to 60 minutes. The parent interviews lasted for 20 to 45 minutes. An interview guide was used, and the interview followed the sequence of questions.

4.2.1.5 Recording techniques

Recording the data means "capturing the actual words of the person being interviewed ... actual quotations spoken by interviewees" (Patton, 1990: 347), and this is always done during the interviewing process itself. Therefore, a tape recorder was used to collect all interview data instead of taking verbatim notes during the interview.

4.2.1.6 Keeping field notes

Field notes refer to the researcher's reflections on what has been seen and heard during the data collection and analysis process (Patton, 1990; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Therefore, analytical and reflected information that was regarded important, and contributed to the understanding of the collected data and their analysis processes were noted in a diary.

4.2.2 Data analysis process

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), the early stages of data analysis occur simultaneously with data gathering, because as the researcher gathers data, willingly or unwillingly, he/she is analysing them. Therefore, in this study the two activities (data collection and data analysis) were

conducted concurrently. However, greater emphasis was placed on collection of data at first, but as the process continued, the emphasis also became greater on analysis of data. The interpretation began early in the process, and was influenced by my pre-knowledge of parental involvement and the literature reviewed (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). I have transcribed the interviews to construct integrated data sets to analyse. I made use of content analysis to determine the presence of certain concepts and meanings. The content analysis enabled me to explore meaningful aspects and indicators of parental involvement. Thus, this study was aimed to explore and understand parental involvement as demonstrated by specific groups of schools (high, intermediate and low parental involvement) and determined by participants' perceptions, attitudes, experiences, limitations, aspirations and relationships with their respective environments.

Although this study bears the characteristics of a descriptive study (i.e. a detailed account of the phenomenon, parental involvement, however, seen by critics as lacking in depth), it went further to adopt interpretations. Interpretations means that the participants' explanations of parental involvement practice could be understood from their own perspectives. The interpretation also included understanding of the limitations of participants' practices of the phenomenon. The following section presents the detailed steps of this study's Phase 2 data analysis (see Appendix F for qualitative data analysis)

- **Transcription**

Transcription is the process of transforming the audio recording of interviews into a transcript. Babbie and Mouton (2001) explain transcribing as writing a text of the interviews. After interviews, full transcriptions of interviews were first done by hand in the informants' home language. The informants' language transcripts were translated into English and typed.

- **Coding and creating categories**

Coding is a process of attaching meaning to segments of data. The reviewed literature guided me to determine what I needed to look for in the units of analysis. Literature stipulated factors regarded as indicators of parental involvement schools (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005; Barton et al., 2004; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Lapp et al., 2002; Burke & Picus, 2001; WCER, 1995). I have identified main categories (theory codes) that have been directly or indirectly indicated by the literature as indicators of high parental involvement (see 2.8 for indicators of high parental involvement) worth being considered when studying to understand the practice of involving parents in the academic education of learners. In this study, the meanings of segments were marked with descriptive words describing the content

of segments (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Then, the clear descriptive words were merged to form abstract inductive categories (See Appendix G for Qualitative data analysis).

4.2.3 Validity of the qualitative study

When qualitative researchers speak of research validity, they are usually referring to “qualitative research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004: 249). The following strategies were used to promote this study’s Phase 2 validity and come up with more credible and defensible findings:

- Low-Inference Descriptors – descriptors phrased very close to the participants’ accounts were used. Participants’ exact words were provided in direct quotations. This was done for the reader to experience the participants’ actual language, dialect, and personal meanings (Johnson & Christensen 2004).
- Data Triangulation – this refers to the use of multiple data sources using a single method to collect data at different places, with different people and different times. Participants’ interviews that were done at six different schools at different times provide multiple data sources while using a single method (i.e. the interview method) of data collection. I applied reflexivity. Reflexivity involves self-awareness and critical self-reflection on my potential biases and dispositions as these might affect the process and conclusions. External audit and theory triangulation were also considered in this study. For example, an attempt has been made to ask an expert for language editing, and the use of multiple theories and perspectives (presented in Chapter 2) helped me to interpret and explain the data.
- Researcher as detective – this was my attempt to search for cause and effect evidence. This position increased my understanding of the data. Thus, rival explanations were systematically eliminated until the final case was made beyond a reasonable doubt.

As alluded to earlier, interpretation has been a built in element, and it took place throughout the whole process. Researchers refer to this analysis procedure as spiral image – a data analysis spiral (Creswell in De Vos, 2005), or cyclical and recursive process (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

4.2.4 Construction of the interview schedules

Interview data were collected through individual interviews which were conducted with professional educators and parents. The standardised open-ended interview questions were constructed for parents, while the interview guide format was applied to school principals and teachers.

Two processes were used to construct the content of interview schedules (interview guide and standardised open-ended), conceptualisation and operationalisation (Neuman, 2003). A construct (involvement) was refined by giving it a conceptual or theoretical definition, i.e. a definition in abstract and theoretical terms (see Section 2.10 of Chapter 2 for a conceptual definition of parental involvement). A construct was turned into a precise conceptual definition as literature had been reviewed, i.e. the definition drawn from what other researchers say. The definition turned the construct (involvement) into its indicators as they are clearly elucidated in Table 2.1 of Chapter 2 of this study. The indicators formed the content of what was asked in interviews.

The standardised open-ended schedule consisted of questions for all the sampled parents. All questions had the same wording and were determined beforehand in order to minimise issues of legitimacy and credibility. The questions were posed in the same wording and order as they appeared in the guide. Although the standardised approach did not permit the pursuit of the topics that were not anticipated when the interview was written, the data collected was still open-ended in the sense that the respondents supplied their own words, thoughts and insights in answering the questions.

4.2.5 Content validation (Authenticity) of the interview schedules

Qualitative researchers are more interested in capturing an inside view and conveying a detailed account of how those being studied feel about, understand and experience events. Therefore, qualitative researchers refer to “*authenticity*” (information based on facts provided according to people’s experiences) than “*validity*” (Neuman, 2003: 185). This study’s interview questions were developed to search for a fair, honest and balanced account of parental involvement as practised in Namibian rural lower primary schools from the viewpoint of professional educators and parents. These are the people who experience this concept on a daily basis. Honesty/truthfulness is the core principle of validity in qualitative research.

Right at the beginning of the session, the interviewees were asked who they were and I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the study. It was pointed out to the participants that their responses were anonymous and confidential. Respect for the interviewees' valuable time was shown by showing them appreciation for their time and information. The questions and the expected outcomes of the interview questions are tabulated in Appendix G (See Appendix G for objectives of the interview questions).

4.3 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA: QUALITATIVE STUDY

The analysis of the interview data collected from professional educators in six rural lower primary schools were conducted to:

- Elicit information on their understanding and perceptions of the concept of parental involvement in academic education of learners.
- Explain activities that indicate schools' parental involvement practices.
- Identify barriers to schools' practices of parental involvement and explain strategies they use to overcome these barriers.
- Explore and find out whether there are differences in schools' parental involvement activities and how schools implement those activities to become high, intermediate or low parental involvement schools.

Analysis of the data collected from parents was conducted to learn and document how they experience and demonstrate parental involvement. It also determined what parents want to do to improve their involvement in academic education of their children.

In so doing, I provided information on how rural lower primary schools in Ohangwena region practise parental involvement in the academic education of learners. The analysis of Phase 1 data of this study had identified six schools to be studied at Phase 2 (see Table 3.9 for the identified six schools) and the schools were classified into three groups: high parental involvement schools (Schools 44 and 28), intermediate parental involvement schools (Schools 35 and 12) and low parental involvement schools (Schools 11 and 64). As indicated in sampling (4.2.2.1), the same six schools were referred to as A and B (high parental involvement), C and D (intermediate parental involvement) and E and F (low parental involvement).

The analysis of the data collected to indicate and give evidence of how lower primary schools in Ohangwena region practise parental involvement in academic education of learners is presented in this report according to the three groups (three units of analysis) in which schools were categorised. This was done as it was regarded a better way to present answers to the research questions focused on at Phase 2 of this study (see section 1.3 for research questions) and aligned with the purposes of the qualitative investigation of this study (see 4.4 for the purpose of the qualitative investigation). The next paragraphs briefly describe the communities in which each group of the parental involvement schools was situated to familiarise the reader with the environment where the data were collected.

4.3.1 Description of communities in which the rural lower primary schools are situated

Presentation and analysis of qualitative data is structured into three levels (high, intermediate and low) according to the three groups of parental involvement schools identified by the analysis of quantitative data at Phase 1 of this study.

High parental involvement schools (A and B)

The professional educators interviewed reported that the communities in which those schools were situated lived below poverty lines. Most of the people in those communities were unemployed and there were no business opportunities in the communities. When it comes to the communities' understanding of education, professional educators from both schools perceived the communities as divided into two groups. The first group consisted of people with better understanding of education and their roles in the education of their children. As a result, they expected schools to deliver quality education that should be able to make their children productive citizens. The other group consisted of people who had less interest and understanding of education. Consequently, this group did not satisfactorily participate in school meetings and other related parental activities.

Intermediate parental involvement schools (C and D)

According to the professional educators the communities in which the two schools were situated were generally responsible, supportive and with better understanding of the education of their children. They interpreted parents sending children to school and parents visiting the school as indicators of an understanding of education.

Low parental involvement schools (E and F)

According to the professional educators, the two schools were situated in communities where members were not so committed to school activities themselves. Generally, most of the parents in those communities were uneducated and did not understand what education is or its importance. Therefore, most parents did not send or motivate their children to go to school and learn. Thus, most of the learners in those communities do not continue beyond grade 10. Professional educators regarded parents' lack of understanding and poverty as the reasons why the communities' children did not proceed beyond Grade 10.

Generally, all six schools were situated in poor communities in which many community members were unemployed, uneducated and lacked understanding of what education is, as well as its importance.

4.3.2 Rural lower primary schools' practices of high, intermediate and low parental involvement

The data on schools' practices of parental involvement is presented under the same themes used to present the data in chapter 3 to maintain reliability of the study' research questions.

4.3.2.1 Rural lower primary schools' practice of positive climate to parental involvement

High parental involvement schools

Professional educators' self reported practice indicates the climate that is conducive to parental involvement. Educators reported that they invite parents to visit the schools and view learners' performance their own time. They further indicate that they welcome, and encourage parents to visit the schools.

Intermediate parental involvement schools

The data from intermediate parental involvement schools was discouraging because professional educators did not provide clear and relevant information in terms of how they create positive climate for parental involvement.

Low parental involvement schools

Low parental involvement schools' professional educators reported that they employed strategies for creating conducive climate and attracting parents' involvement in their children's academic education. Educators reported that they work with parents as friends, visit parents at their homes, provide parents the freedom to visit the school and participate in lesson observations and presentations. Furthermore, these parents are awarded certificates of appreciation, and are requested to maintain the school properties and its surroundings.

Giving parents the freedom to visit schools at convenient times, welcoming them and awarding their initiatives to support schools, characterise the positive climate at high- and low parental involvement schools. Teacher Lesheni of school E explained personal contact and relationship building with parents as best ways to get them involved successfully.

'Parents, I greet them nicely, try to make them my friends. When the parent comes to you, you will tell him/her to support and assist the child when doing school work. Some parents have problems of not knowing how to read. When you invite them to school, they think that they will be asked to do something which will require them to read or write. Now you make them become closer to you until they understand.' (Lesheni, 18 July 2007).

4.3.2.2 Rural lower primary schools' practice of provision for parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement

High parental involvement schools

Educators of high parental involvement schools provide parents with educational opportunities in which they (parents) would gain knowledge and skills needed for supporting their children's academic education. Reported opportunities included: asking and allowing parents to observe teachers teaching; observing their children's classroom work; convening parent meetings to discuss the importance of education; providing literacy education classes; advising parents about the importance of feeding their children before they come to school; discussing school needs with parents; identifying how parents are expected to assist schools; and showing parents how to assist their children with reading at home. Related to empowering parents with literacy skills Principal Fudeni of school A reported:

'When becoming to literacy, we having the program have running, parents are invited to come to attend literacy classes. ...we have convince them the idea that they have to help the school, to help the learners. While they are at the home to assist the kids for learning.' (Fudeni, 12 July 2007).

Principal Mkwana's (of school B) response gave more examples of how schools reach out to parents, engaging them in authentic conversations, that educate and teach them how to help their children with reading. Principal Mkwana related:

'Sometimes the school invites the parents to come to the Parents Day, and the teachers, the responsible teachers for a certain grade has to show them how they ... how they assist their kids in terms of reading at home.' (Mkwana, 19 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

According to the participants, the two schools in this group employed activities meant to educate, support and facilitate parental empowerment among parents in order for them to support and assist their children's academic education. Therefore, the data suggested the following activities as employed by intermediate parental involvement schools:

Schools established committees consisting of parents and teachers to deal with lower primary issues; share ideas on how to assist poor performing children; set days for parents to inspect their children's progress; encourage parents to give children enough time for school work at home; invite parents to observe teaching in classrooms; use parents who attend meetings to explain the importance of attending meetings to those who do not attend; organise events for parents where learners' demonstrate (through role-playing) what and how they learn at school; call meetings for parents to share with them important information about HIV/AIDS, how they (parents) can support the school; and hold parent-teacher meetings to discuss learners' performance and behaviours.

According to the professional educators' responses, activities such as parents' involvement in teaching, lesson observations, how to provide assistance with homework and organising events at which learners role play what they learn at school, do not only benefit learners, but also develop parents' understanding of education. Teacher Shiwa of school C claimed:

'Parents assist us also in teaching. I ask them to come and teach children about stories, or how to make pots etc. I ask parents to assist children when doing their homework. ... Attending and observing lessons help parents to develop understanding of the education of their children.' (Shiwa, 16 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

The data collected from low parental involvement schools indicates that professional educators discuss with parents about how they can help their children with school work; the importance of attending meetings and coming to schools to inspect their children's work. Professional educators invite parents for lesson observations and discussions about learners' absenteeism, tardiness, their (parents) roles and responsibilities in terms of learners' academic learning; and provide parents with

opportunities for lesson presentations. Principal Kavena of school F spelled out some examples of what she and her colleagues discuss with parents:

'We talk about things such as absenteeism; late coming and class visits. We advise parents to free themselves from their busy schedules, come to school, sit in the classrooms and observe their children's participation.' (Kavena, 21 July 2007).

Teacher Lesheni of school E added: *'Pastors are requested to teach children Religious and Moral Education'* (Lesheni, 18 July 2007).

4.3.2.3 Rural lower primary schools' practice of the use of community resources

High parental involvement

The practice of using community resources (financial, material and human) was revealed by the professional educators' responses. The specific activities employed by the two schools were:

Seeking financial support from non-governmental organisations; making school board members liaisons between the school and parents; asking the government to provide books and other teaching and learning materials; securing parent advices on how to deal with slow learners and other problematic children; inviting other parents as guest speakers at parent meetings; and asking community members to assist teachers in teaching contents that are challenging to them. Explaining how her school involves community members to support teaching, Teacher Ina of school A said:

'If a teacher experiences part of his/her subject content of which he/she does not have enough information, that teacher can approach a community member for assistance. This is better than sending children to look for information on their own.' (Ina, 12 July 2007)

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Apart from the fact that professional educators of intermediate parental involvement schools advise parents on how to be with children, they also invite guest speakers from the community to talk to parents. Teacher Kajolo of school D reported on how this activity is carried out at her school. She said:

'Many times we organize meetings for them, meetings in which we give them advice on how to be with children. Advice is given by us, teachers, parents or let me say fellow parents, as well as invited guests from the community.' (Kajolo, 15 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Professional educators in low involvement schools know that teaching about HIV/AIDS remains everyone's responsibility. Also, because this disease is incurable and terminal, they believe in giving correct and accurate information to their learners. They involve health professionals in

information dissemination about the disease. Nurses were invited to talk to learners about prevention, treatment and understanding of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the two schools invite parents and community members to meetings to discuss problems about learners and other school problems as well as request community members to contribute to school development fund. The data suggest that low involvement schools request donations from community members and involve parents in the decision making process. Interviewees reasoned that they could not exclude community members because the children they taught were part of the community. Teacher Lesheni of school E explained how her school involves health workers:

'The government realises that HIV/AIDS becomes everyone's concern and responsibility. The government recommends for all school curricula to include knowledge and understanding of this disease. Curricula should address how to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, as well as how to take care of people affected by HIV/AIDS. Our school requests nurses to come and explain these things to our learners. We ask hospitals and clinics to provide us with necessary facilities to use for prevention.' (Lesheni, 18 July 2007).

4.3.2.4 Rural lower primary schools' practice of the provision of opportunities for technical support for classroom activities to parents

High parental involvement schools

Professional educators of high parental involvement schools provide parents with opportunities for technical support by discussing with parents their (parents) needs and encourage them to participate in teaching culture related content and children's informal assessment at home. They practise this as they advise parents to discuss school work with their children on a daily basis. Educators discuss with parents about learners' learning problems in a specific subject or area of education. Furthermore, they seek parents' advice on what to do with the specific learning problems. According to the collected data, this strategy makes parents become interested in helping children with learning problems at home. In relation to this, Teacher Kali of school B explained:

'We invite parents to come in and look at their learners' work. They see where his/her child stands. From there, teachers talk to parents, informing them that this learner needs help in this subject or in this area of education. Teachers seek ideas from parents of how to look after this. The parent becomes interested to ask learners to bring the book home. They will sit and help the learners.' (Kali, 19 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Professional educators of intermediate parental involvement schools claim that they involve parents in lesson observations and teaching, especially traditional contents, and ask them to assist children when doing homework. Teacher Shiwa of school C asserted:

'Parents assist us also in teaching I ask them to come and teach children about stories, or how to make pots etc. I ask parents to assist children when doing their homework. ... Attending and observing lessons help parents to develop understanding of the education of their children.' (Shiwa, 16 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Apart from the fact that low parental involvement schools provide parents with opportunities for lesson presentations, the data did not suggest much about how the two schools in this group create educational opportunities for parents to provide technical support for their children's academic learning.

4.3.2.5 Rural lower primary schools' practice of the use of communication options

With regard to the question about mechanisms and options professional educators use to communicate with parents for the benefit of learners' academic education, the three groups of schools came up with the following:

Professional educators from **high parental involvement schools** mentioned that they use meetings, parent days, letters and memos, and fellow professional educators to make contact and communicate with parents and other stakeholders. The stakeholders that share the responsibility of learners' academic education were parents, nurses, councillors, pastors, headmen, the Ministry of Education as well as teachers and learners themselves.

Intermediate parental involvement schools' professional educators reported that they make use of letters, telephones, radios, other learners from the school, neighbours, churches and meetings to get hold of and communicate with parents and other stakeholders. Apart from parents, the other stakeholders they communicate with and share the responsibility of academic education for learners were the Ministry of Education and fellow teachers.

Low parental involvement schools make use of letters, meetings, churches, radios and headmen as communication options for getting in touch with stakeholders. The other potential stakeholders they mentioned apart from parents were business people, nurses, councillors, pastors, headmen, the Ministry of Education and fellow teachers.

In general this study's data gave multiple communication types through which schools make contact with parents and community members for the promotion of academic learning of learners.

However, only meetings and letters were commonly mentioned across the three groups of schools as communication options. Parents, the Ministry of Education and fellow teachers were indicated as common stakeholders at all school.

Although there were two schools that involved the stakeholders from local business as well as cultural and community institutions as part of their involvement practice, it is obvious there is under utilisation and/or undervaluing of other important services for promoting parental involvement available in communities. Other important services neglected were health care; national services and volunteer organizations; church organisations; and cultural and community based institutions.

4.3.2.6 Rural lower primary schools' practice of involvement of parents in decision-making and power-sharing activities

High parental involvement schools

The popular dimension of parental involvement practised by the two high parental involvement schools was making parents part and parcel of school boards and money generating committees and projects. Professional educators reported that involvement of parents in fund-raising committees contributed to the promotion of learners' academic education because the money generated from the projects were used to buy materials needed for academic teaching and learning. Principal Fudeni of school A elaborated on how he and his colleagues make use of money generated from a project of sewing school uniforms in which parents play a major role at his school:

'...we try to organize some kind of fundraising for developing of the school, since we really experience some problems on facilities which, may be the Ministry could not distribute enough to each of the learners. So we make some fundraising for getting some additional mathematics for the learners so that learners could do very well.' (Fudeni, 12 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

According to the data, establishing special committees (that include teachers, parents and learners) meant to deal with lower primary issues such as discussing how to assist poor performing children, is a clear testimony of intermediate parental involvement schools' action to make parents support learners' academic education. Teacher Daan of school C reported of his school's attempt to involve parents in such a decision making committees for the sake of supporting learners' academic education:

'We experience difficulties in coping up with teaching learners. We came up with a plan of involving them much, and then we decided to form a committee for lower primary. We share ideas on how we can help such learners who perform badly ... In return, some parents responded positively that, they teaching their kids also at home on some topics.' (Daan, 16 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

The data collected from professional educators suggest that low parental involvement schools involved parents in decision making processes. Professional educators argued that they did not impose decisions on parents, but involved them in the decisions making processes so that parents are part of the decisions. On this practice, Principal Uusiku of school E elucidated:

'When the school realizes that it needs something, the community members are the first people to be approached to do something, even donating few cents to contribute to the erection of infrastructures. We try to make the community understand first about the problems at school because the children we teach are the community's children and the school belongs to the community in which it is situated. We make decisions together. ... It makes us happy because parents feel that the decisions are theirs, and they made them for their school.' (Uusiku, 18 July 2007).

Professional educators across the three groups of schools reported on school boards, committees for generating money and dealing with lower primary issues and poor performing learners as the avenues they normally use to share leadership and decision making with parents.

4.3.3 Rural lower primary schools' attitudes towards parental involvement on a high, intermediate and low level

Professional educators' attitudes towards parental involvement were sought through requesting parents to describe the attitude they normally experience from the professional educators of the schools where their children attend. The idea of investigating this aspect of parental involvement practice from the parents' perspective was explored to find out whether what educators said they were doing in 3.6.4 (chapter 3) corresponds with what parents claimed they experienced. Therefore, the following paragraphs present educators' attitudes towards involvement from the parents' views.

High parental involvement schools

For the high parental involvement schools' parents with whom I spoke to indicated that they felt quite welcome and respected at their schools and that this sense of belonging was very important to them. In addition, parents reported that the professional educators showed satisfaction with their participation in discussions.

Intermediate parental involvement schools

The data indicate that intermediate parental involvement schools convene parent-school official interactions for the sake of a common goal - the academic development of learners. This shared

outcome has been sustained by the two intermediate parental involvement schools dynamics of cooperating (with parents, which typically results in sharing information with them), and listening to each other and sharing positive perspectives on involvement.

Low parental involvement schools

Although low parental involvement schools also reported educators' positive attitudes towards parental involvement, this was not without its setbacks from some parents. Parent Ndjedele of school E lamented that some parents have a 'never mind' attitude towards invitations from the school. Ndjedele testified that when those parents are called for meetings they refuse and say, '*Let the school expel my child if it so wishes, I will not go there.*' (Ndjedele, 18 July 2007).

To the professional educators' attitude towards parental involvement, Parent Kapau of school A commented:

'They behave very well. They respect parents. Parents play a major role during parent meeting discussions. The principal and teachers indicate satisfaction when we parents participate in discussions.' (Kapau, 14 July 2007).

The data across the three groups of schools indicated that parents experienced a welcoming attitude, positive behaviour, cooperation, good relationships and mutual respect from professional educators. Hence, the parents claimed that they were allowed to play major roles during meeting discussions. Furthermore, parents reported that the principals and teachers showed satisfaction with their participation in discussions.

4.3.4 Professional educators' perceptions regarding parental involvement in academic education of learners in rural lower primary schools

High parental involvement schools

The data collected from professional educators of high parental involvement schools suggested their perceptions of parental involvement which include: parents' cooperation with teachers, participation in lesson presentations and assistance for learners' activities in classrooms and at home. The same people further believe that involvement is when parents make sure that arrangements of services such as school stationery, health care, child care and basic needs are in place.

For instance, Teacher Kali of school B defined parental involvement as:

'The parents come to school and present something to the learners, may be the teacher might not really aware of, like the cultural issues. The parents can come and explain more and more about that. Or may be is when the parents come in and look after learners' activities in the classroom, and then see where the learners need help and then from there may be they help the learners to do their activities

better. (Kali, 19 July 2007).

In the same vein professional educators described academic education as education that offers the content that enhances learners' knowledge, skills and wisdom, and serves as an anchor on which the learner's future will be based.

Intermediate parental involvement schools

The responses of professional educators of intermediate parental involvement schools define involvement as: parents' visits to the schools, monitoring and observing of teachers' teaching and learners' punctuality and attendance. They understand involvement in the light of a good relationship between the schools and parents, parents' encouragement for children to study hard, and parents' participation in school organisation and development.

Principal Puni of school C is of the opinion that:

'When we talk about parental involvement, we mean parents visiting the school to see what their children do, their good performance, making sure that their children arrive at school on time, seeing if their children do their daily activities, making sure whether teachers teach properly and learners are engaged in teaching and learning. ... They assure themselves of their children's presence at school'
(Puni, 16 July 2007).

According to the professional educators of intermediate schools, academic education could be defined as education that teaches learners basic skills which they can apply in the present everyday life, and in the future.

Low parental involvement schools

The concept parental involvement was perceived by professional educators of low parental involvement schools as parents' commitment to education when they establish a good working relationship with teachers for the sake of learners' progress; parents visit the schools to observe, participate in teaching and do other schools activities (e.g. active participation in fundraising events), observe lessons and learners' classroom activities; ensure learners' attendance and punctuality; and assist learners with the application of what they learn at school. In relation to this Teacher Sheeli of school F stated:

'Yes, I understand it that parents should ask their children what they learn from school, assist them when they experience a problem in learning at home, come to visit and observe how their children are performing. They can also teach children stories, etc.' (Sheeli, 21 July 2007).

About academic education, professional educators describe it as education of reading, writing, arithmetic and speaking correctly. They further explain academic education as education that shapes the child's future, makes the child to become a useful person in the future and a responsible citizen. Shedding light on this, Principal Uusiku of school E had this to say:

'It is the education the child receives to support and help him/her in the future. Education that makes the child able to do something and become a useful person in the future. The education that makes a child help the nation.' (Uusiku, 18 July 2007).

Professional educators' (across all three groups of schools) perceptions of parental involvement emphasised cooperation and good relationship between them and parents, parents' participation in teaching and assisting learners with homework. They understand academic education in terms of educating learners to acquire knowledge and skills of reading, writing and arithmetic.

However, most of the professional educators' understanding of involvement indicates a one-way kind of involvement. Parents provide service and schools receive support from parents but schools do not provide support to parents.

4.3.5 Professional educators' perceptions of the schools and parents' roles and responsibilities regarding parental involvement in rural lower primary schools

The question about the roles and responsibilities of schools and parents was asked with the assumption that talking with professional educators would provide insight into their understanding of their and parents' roles and responsibilities as far as parental involvement in academic education of learners is concerned. The following are their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the schools in learners' academic education:

High parental involvement schools

Professional educators regard all the activities that require formal training and activities which parents are not able to assist their children with as the responsibility of schools.

They felt that since parents are not formally trained to do some of the tasks, schools should take the responsibility of those activities such as daily planning and preparation of lessons as well as assessment, grading and promotion of learners. Explaining why planning and preparation should be the teachers' responsibilities, Teacher Line of school B clarified:

'For example, preparing for a specific lesson is my task. Preparing learners' activities is my task. These are my tasks because there are some of the things parents cannot do, they are not trained to

do so.' (Line, 19 July 2007).

Furthermore, professional educators consider: giving advice to the school; contributing to the school development fund and providing other financial support; buying school uniforms; assisting children when doing their projects and other school activities at home as the responsibility of parents.

Principal Mkwana of school B summarised these and gave her explanation about home approaches to parental involvement:

'I think the responsibility of parents is to pay the school fees for their children, and to buy the school uniforms. ... so the task is like a home-work. A homework should be done at school as well as at home. A project also, and reading also, parents need to assist their children when it comes to reading.'

(Mkwana, 19 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

The following are other schools' roles and responsibilities that were mentioned by intermediate parental involvement professional educators:

Teachers making sure that the prescribed syllabi are followed; teaching of learners to obey school rules and regulations; and providing the needed learning materials to the learners.

Furthermore, supplying schools with teaching aids; providing learners' physical needs; supporting a positive school climate; and motivating teachers and boosting their morale were referred to as part of parents' responsibilities. In addition, professional educators felt that parents should have the responsibility of informing the school about children's problems and monitoring children's learning at home and at school. With regards to supporting school climate, motivating teachers and boosting their morale, Principal Shange reported:

'Parents are responsible for supporting the school climate. The movements of parents at school increase teacher's motivation as teachers realize that what they do at school please parents. Teachers do their work properly. It gives them moral support.' (Shange, 15 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Parents at the low parental involvement schools felt that activities such as work distributions, visiting parents on a daily basis and making sure that the learners have needed materials for learning in class such as exercise books and pens, examination sheets, chair and desks are the roles and responsibilities of schools. In relation to that, Principal Uusiku of school E stated:

'For example, deciding who to teach which subjects, on what level ... and who to do what. As well, who is responsible for attending to parents who visit the school on a daily basis.'

(Uusiku, 18 July 2007).

In addition, professional educators feel that parents are responsible for paying for and/or negotiating school development fund with schools, provision of children's physical needs, sending children to school every day and on time, as well as asking children what they learn at school on a daily basis.

According to the data collected from professional educators at all three school groups, the content and activities in which parents were not formally trained, assuring that the contents taught are in line with the syllabi and providing learners with needed learning materials and stationery in class, were regarded as the roles and responsibilities of schools.

According to the data, high parental involvement schools were found organising some involvement activities that were different from other schools' (intermediate and low) activities such as:

- Provide direct services to learners which are welcomed by parents, such as sell school uniforms at a much lower price to learners; provide free uniforms to orphans and vulnerable children; and serve lunch to orphans and vulnerable children.
- Seek financial support from non-governmental organisations.
- Discuss with parents about the importance of their ongoing involvement in their children's education (e.g assessing their school work on a daily basis)
- Provide literacy education classes.
- Create projects (e.g. sewing) in which parents and other community members were employed.
- Secure parent advice on how to deal with slow learners and other problematic children.
- Advise parents about the importance of feeding their children before they come to school.
- Teachers for different grades show parents how to assist their children with reading at home.

4.3.6 Professional educators' reports of barriers to parental involvement that were experienced at their rural lower primary schools.

When asked about the obstacles they faced in practising parental involvement as well as what they thought could be the causes, professional educators from each of the three groups of schools reported several obstacles and their possible causes as indicated in the following tables 4.4 – 4.6 respectively.

High parental involvement schools

The data indicated that most of the barriers experienced by the high parental involvement schools were caused by parents' lack of understanding, unemployment and poverty.

TABLE 4.3: Barriers to parental involvement and their causes experienced by high parental involvement schools

Barriers	Causes
Parents and guardians prioritise other issues than the education of their children.	Unemployment and poverty; lack of understanding of the importance of education; and lack of time due to too much domestic work.
Lack of financial support and payment of the school development fund.	Unemployment; lack of understanding; and ignorance.
Exclusion of the lower primary phase when government officers' visit schools.	Undervaluing of the lower primary phase by the government.
Male parents do not attend literacy classes.	Male parents' prejudice against literacy lessons/classes.
Lack of and/or insufficient participation in meetings and other school activities.	Children live with elderly people; lack of time; lack of understanding; long distances; ignorance and fear of embarrassment.
Lack of electric and modern equipments.	Lack of donations, unemployment and poverty.

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Also, in the intermediate parental involvement schools illiteracy and poverty appear to be some of the major causes of barriers to parental involvement in the two schools experience in their practice of this phenomenon.

TABLE 4.4: Barriers to parental involvement and their causes experienced by intermediate parental involvement schools

Barriers	Causes
Parents and guardians prioritise other things than the education of their children.	Lack of vision and assets like cattle and 'mahangu' fields are more valued than education of their children.
Lack of financial support and payment of the school development fund.	Unemployment and poverty.
Insufficient infrastructure	Lack of water at schools
Parents are unable to assist their children academically.	Illiteracy and parents who work far from home.

Low parental involvement schools

Generally, the data collected from low parental involvement schools gives an impression that the problem of parents' lack of participation in meetings is commonly experienced by both schools. The data further suggested that this problem is caused by inability of elderly guardians to come to schools and participate in activities as well as poverty and the impact of HIV/AIDS

TABLE 4.5: Barriers to parental involvement and their causes experienced by low parental involvement schools

Barriers	Causes
Parents and guardians prioritise other things than the education of their children.	Limited understanding about the importance of education, and poverty.
Lack of financial support and payment of the school development fund.	Unemployment and poverty; learners live with elderly people and they do not have enough money to contribute to school development fund; guardians misuse the money provided for orphans' school needs by the government; lack of materials in the environment; and lack of means to reward committed and hardworking parents.
Some parents do not assist their children academically.	Elderly people do not reach schools for educational development opportunities; professional educators are unable to visit parents and guardians at home due to long distances; and lack of commitment on the side of parents.
Lack of and/or insufficient participation in meetings and other school activities.	Impact of HIV/AIDS on children's living with elderly people; lack of job opportunities in the environment, therefore, employed parents work away from home.
Some children live alone.	Ill-health and death of parents and/or family relatives due to HIV/AIDS.

Parents' priority of other issues than education of their children, lack of financial support and insufficient participation in meetings were reported as some of the common barriers to all schools. Lack of understanding, unemployment, poverty, inability of elderly and illiterate guardians to assist children's learning, were indicated as the causes for barriers schools experience across the three groups.

4.3.7 The strategies used by rural lower primary schools in dealing with the barriers to parental involvement

Professional educators' reports on this aspect were not encouraging. Some of the interviewees did not provide relevant information on the strategies they employed to address barriers encountered during parental involvement practice. However, some schools across all three groups of schools explained how they addressed a few of those barriers that were mentioned.

High parental involvement schools

To address the issue of financial support, high parental involvement schools organise fund-raising projects and events such as bazaars, ask parents for advice on how to deal with a specific challenge, and advise parents on the possibilities for generating money for themselves in order to be able to afford payments for the school development fund.

In relation to parents lack or insufficient participation in meetings and other school activities, the data shows that staff organised parent meetings in which professional educators enlightened parents about their responsibilities. Professional educators reported that they have requested school boards to speak to parents on their behalf and acting as a liaison between the school and the parents. Regarding how her school dealt with the challenge of lack of or insufficient participation, Teacher Line of school B stated:

'We discuss the problem about individual parents with the school board. The school board contacts the parent for the parent to contact the school.' (Line , 17 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

About the parents and guardians who prioritise other issues than the education of their children, professional educators asserted that they invited parents to discuss with them about the impact of absenteeism on learners' performance.

Another strategy the schools used was to organise parent meetings and invited regional councillors to participate in discussions with parents about their (parents) obligations and how the government expects them to contribute to the education of their children. Principal Shange of school D explained:

'We discuss with a parent and show him/her the weakness of his/her child, or what the child could not do due to daily absenteeism.' (Shange, 15 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Low parental involvement schools requested village headmen to help discuss the problem with parents in their villages, and help them (parents) understand the importance for children to attend school on a daily basis. Concerning the lack of financial support as well as payment to the school development fund by parents, professional educators claimed that schools established a negotiation system in which parents who were unable to contribute to the school development fund could discuss their problems with the schools. In this regard, Principal Uusiku of school E is of opinion that:

'It is the parent's role to pay the school development fund when he can, and if he cannot, then he is responsible to come and negotiate with the school.' (Uusiku, 12 July 2007).

The data show that the schools across all three groups tried the following strategies to address the barriers they experience during the process of implementing parental involvement: organise fund-raising projects, advise parents on the possibilities of generating money, explain to parents about their responsibilities and the impact of learners' absenteeism on their performance, ask the school board members to liaise between the school and parents, and task regional councillors to discuss with parents about the government's expectations of parents.

4.3.8 Parental involvement activities and strategies which are relevant to learners' academic education but not compatible with the current rural conditions in Namibia.

About parental involvement activities which are relevant but not compatible with the current rural conditions, the three groups of schools' professional educators responded as follows:

High parental involvement schools

High parental involvement schools' educators claimed that learning activities that need electric equipments such as computers were not possible with rural schools because most of rural areas did not have electricity. A convincing example was given by Teacher Kali of school B as he further explained this problem in relation to parents' support for learners' academic education:

'We do not have electricity and even if we get electricity, it is only at school. At home learners will not be able to continue with these things. They cannot practice computer skills at home. Parents do not have electricity and computers at home. Therefore, one cannot ask parents to help with computer skills at home.' (Kali, 19 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Intermediate parental involvement schools' educators felt that without sufficient buildings and lack of space to be used as libraries at most of rural schools, requesting parents to assist learners in developing reading skills and a love of reading at schools was not possible. For schools without library space like Puni's school, they find it very difficult to implement this strategy. Puni of school C commented:

'We need buildings, especially the library buildings. It is a problem for learners and parents. They cannot come, sit and read in the office. Also, they cannot take books out of this office. They may lose or damage books. This is just a problem.' (Puni, 16 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Government support in the form of funds for orphans' school needs was referred to by low parental involvement schools as one of the incompatible involvement strategies in rural schools. Educators claimed that because of poverty, guardians eventually end up using children's money for their own needs other than for the learners' schools needs. Teacher Lesheni of school E suggested how this practice could be improved to fit rural community:

'However, our government gives money to orphans for their school needs. But guardians misuse this money. Instead of using this money for orphans' needs, they use it for their own needs. Children come to school without proper school uniforms. They have no warm clothes and most come with bare feet even in winter time. I'm suggesting, I mean I wish it could be possible for the government to give vouchers instead of cash. The vouchers can be used to pay for the school development fund, medical treatment, food and clothes as well as school supplies.' (Lesheni, 18 July 2007).

The activities mentioned by parents from the three groups of schools were learning activities that need electric equipment such as computers, requesting parents to contribute to learners' development of love of reading skills at school and government support in the form of funds for orphans' school needs. The reasons given were lack of electricity in rural areas, lack of spaces in schools, and poverty in the communities.

4.3.9 How parents support rural lower primary schools for the academic education of their children

In order to get the whole picture around parental involvement, I have attempted to research parents' experiences of involvement in terms of what they do to support schools in educating their children academically, the effect of their support for schools in academic education of learners, how they might be allowed to contribute more, and the limitations and difficulties they experienced in the process of supporting schools. This data offered helpful information on how parental involvement is

practised in rural lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region. In terms of what parents actually do, they claimed that they support schools and spelled out activities in which they may get involved.

High parental involvement schools

Parents from high parental involvement schools claimed that they support schools by attending meetings and giving advice to teachers and school leaders (especially in school board meetings); donating awards for hardworking learners; sharing knowledge with learners (such as culture related topics as well as HIV and AIDS); providing learners with school stationery and allowing children to attend school regularly. In Parent Weyulu's (of school A) words:

'I donated a trophy to this school. The trophy was to be given to any hardworking learner, the child who performs higher than every learner in the whole school. I also serve in the school board committee where I give my advice to the leadership of the school.' (Weyulu, 14 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Intermediate parental involvement schools' parents affirmed that their actions of serving on school board committees; providing learners with school stationery; sending children to school on a daily basis and on time; visiting schools; reminding children about and assisting them with homework characterised their support for schools. Tolina's (of school D) response serves as an example of intermediate parental involvement schools' parents' claims:

'When a teacher complains about children coming to school late, I try for my child to be punctual. If they say children do not learn hard, I commit myself by asking my children what they have done at school on a daily basis and assist the child in doing his/her school work.' (Tolina, 15 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Low parental involvement schools' parents also reported that they support schools to educate learners academically. They stated their contribution as being the provision of required school stationery to their children; their service on school board committees; their encouragement of learners to study hard; payment for school development fund; provision of teaching and learning aids; and making sure that learners attend classes on a daily basis. To these claims, parent Ndjedele stated:

'I chase them to school every day. Go to school, do not absent yourself from school. If one of them happens not to go to school or goes half way, I take him/her myself to school. I follow them until I see that they enter the school yard.' (Ndjedele, 18 July 2007).

These responses indicate that parents involvement seem to be reaction and action based. In terms of reactions, some of the talks performed by parents were mostly endorsed within the prescribed structures and norms set up by the Ministry and/or form part of the school policies. For example parent's contributions to the school development fund; providing learners with school stationery; sending learners to school on a daily basis; attending school board meetings and giving advice to school leaders. However, there were also critical activities manifested by the actions such as parents assisting teachers in sharing knowledge with learners; providing teaching aids; donating awards for hardworking and best learners; and giving financial or any other form of donations.

4.3.10 Parents' report on the reasons and impact of their support for rural lower primary schools in the academic education of their children

When asked why they thought it was important for them to support their children's academic education and whether they saw any impact of their support in their children's learning, parents from the three groups of schools responded as follows:

High parental involvement schools

Parents reported that attending meetings together with professional educators and discussing children's education and school needs encourage teachers to work very hard. Good relationships between them and teachers provide them with a chance to collaboratively focus on the learner's progress, and encourage teachers and learners to work hard as well as improve their performance. To illustrate these notions, Parent Weyulu's (of school A) verbatim remarks are presented here.

'I do this as my contribution to the encouragement for teachers and learners to work very hard. It is very encouraging to the teachers when they see that parents are supporting them.' (Weyulu, 14 July 2007).

The data indicated that by supporting the schools, parents may also assist newly qualified teachers with the employment and application of teaching contents. Parents believe that newly qualified teachers are inexperienced and have limited knowledge, especially in culturally related information.

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Reasons why parents felt it was important to support schools were also given by parents from intermediate parental involvement schools as they reasoned that they view education as one of the most important aspect of life. Support creates good relationships between parents and teachers, and contributes to the progress of the school as well as the progress and future of the children. It was

their view that parents support their children's academic education because they do not want to be the cause of children missing education. Secondly, they are aware that to cope with life, education is needed. To these, Ely's (of school D) words were:

'Education is the most important thing in the whole world, everyone who has not progressed in life in terms of education feels it is their parents who are to be blamed. Now we are living in a progressed and civilized world, we want our children to be educated.' (Ely, 15 July 2007).

The same parents maintained that parent support encourages children do their homework, become committed and perform well.

Low parental involvement schools

Parents believed that if they support their children's education, their children may obtain success in life than them (parents). That means children would become professionals, secure employment and become useful citizens in the community. Parent Ndjedele of school E expressed his confidence in the potential of parents' support to influence their children's future. He said:

'Our children should not be like us. I did not attend school in my life. My school was 'looking after cattle', and from there I stayed home. It was my peer group who taught me reading and writing. Nowadays, our children are educated in school. Education produces teachers, nurses as well as officers. If your child does not have a certificate, he/she will not get a job.' (Ndjedele, 18 July 2007).

Furthermore, the data indicated parents' belief that the school development would be realised if parents support their children's education today, because they (children) may determine the nation's future success or lack of it. If children develop today, they will develop the school in the future.

The data across the groups suggest the following effect of parental involvement: encouragement of teachers to work hard, improvement of learners' performance, support for newly qualified and inexperienced teachers, development of good relationships between teachers and parents' commitment of learners, guarantee of learners' successful future.

4.3.11 Parents' experiences of difficulties in the process of parental involvement

When parents were asked about difficulties they experienced in attempting to contribute and support schools' academic activities, they came up with the experiences as tabulated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.7 shows that the data collected from high parental involvement schools suggests that parents' lack of and/or limited knowledge made them feel inferior to professional educators and this developed into estranged relationships. Moreover, parents viewed alcoholism as a cause of lack of active participation schools activities. Lack of school policies on parental involvement and/or

ownership of policies were some of the difficulties causing parents not to support schools. Parents stressed that their poverty status also prevented them from participating in school activities. Although school A offers literacy education classes, parents from school B listed illiteracy as another hindrance. Parent Namwenyo's (of school B) responses related:

'Yes, like us in our community, many parents cannot read. How can they assist their children if they cannot read?' (Namwenyo, 20 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Parents from intermediate parental involvement schools indicate lack of understanding and alcohol abuse as the major setbacks prevent them from exercising substantive participation in their children's academic education. The data reported that when it comes to parents supporting schools in solving learner-related learning problems, parents become defensive towards their children's mistakes. They also reported that some parents were too busy performing personal business. These parents, by not sending their children to school, encouraged them (children) to drop-out. Poverty was also found to be one of impedes on parents' way of supporting schools' academic activities. For example, School C's parents claimed that it was almost impossible for them to send their children to school during winter time. At that school, lower primary learners receive their lessons in sheds. As sheds become very cold during winter time, schools find it hard to carry on with school activities during winterseason. This suggested that most of academic activities at schools are interfered with. Parent Kavisi explained this situation at her school. Kavisi put it like this:

'Another thing is infrastructures. During winter time, small children are not taught because the sheds are very cold. You find all children standing in the sun for the whole day.' (Kavisi, 16 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Parents admitted that most of them in that community were illiterate. As a result, they were unable to assist their children academically. The data indicates lack of cooperation during meetings. According to the data, parents explained that they had no other source of income apart from communal farming. Parent Nghitu of school F related:

'It is about income. Here in rural area we do not have income. If you do not work in your field to produce something, and take some of your produce and sell it, then truly speaking there is nothing.' (Nghitu, 21 July 2007).

TABLE 4.6: Difficulties experienced by parents in the process of parental involvement

High parental involvement schools	Intermediate parental involvement schools	Low parental involvement schools
Alienation. Lack of understanding of the value of education. Low self- esteem and lack of confidence. Parents’ preference for drinking rather than attending to their children’s education. Lack of school policies on parental involvement Illiteracy.	Lack of understanding of the value of education. Parents’ preference for drinking rather than attending to their children’s education. Lack of income. Lack of cooperation and collaboration among parents, as well as parents who are defensive about their children’ faults. Insufficient classrooms. Parents are too busy and dedicated their time to domestic and other income generating activities.	Lack of understanding. Lack of cooperation among parents. Lack of income. Lack of communication between parents and professional educators.

The difficulties experienced by parents across the three groups of schools include among others alcoholism, lack of school policies on parental involvement, parents’ poverty status, illiteracy, lack of understanding, parents’ defensive attitude, learners’ absenteeism, lack of proper infrastructure, lack of cooperation among parents and unemployment.

4.3.12 What parents would like to be allowed to do for the promotion of their good relationship with professional educators in rural lower primary schools

Although parents reported on good relationships and a respectful attitude they experienced from professional educators, they still emphasised that they preferred an allowance to contribute more for the promotion of good relationships.

High parental involvement schools

The data indicated parent’ wishes of what each group of schools’ parents prefer to do. For example, high parental involvement schools’ parents would like to sit in lessons when teachers are teaching

so that they may learn and be able to support their children at home. They would like to participate in teaching as well as contributing to the provision of teaching and learning materials. Parent Weyulu of school A explained why this is an important aspect of parental involvement:

'I would like parents to be allowed to sit in lessons because, this may help them to learn also and be able to support their children's ability to do their school activities and learn at home.' (Weyulu, 14 July 2007).

Intermediate parental involvement schools

Intermediate parental involvement schools' parents would like to be allowed to observe teaching, monitor teachers' commitment in terms of lesson planning and preparations, assist with teaching, and inspect children's books. Parent Kavisi's (of school C) response highlighted an aspect of their wishes:

'We want to be allowed to attend children's lessons, to listen and observe how teachers teach. School board members should be allowed to look at teachers' lesson planning and preparations.' (Kavisi, 16 July 2007).

Low parental involvement schools

Low parental involvement schools' parents indicated that they were more willing to participate in teaching children culture related content as well as story telling. They would like to see school board members engaging parents who do not send their children to schools every day in discussions.

The data across the three groups of schools emphasised that parents are interested in doing classroom related activities such as observations of teaching and learning, contributing to teaching and learning materials, and participating in teaching as part of their contributions to their children's academic education.

4.4 INTEGRATION AND COMPARISON OF THE FINDINGS OF HIGH, INTERMEDIATE AND LOW PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Although all three groups of schools were generally situated in poor communities, parents who showed involvement in schools at high or intermediate level had better commitment towards education. They send their children to school regularly and expect schools to deliver quality education to their children. The findings from the high and intermediate groups of schools showed

acceptable level of commitment and support by parents for the academic activities of schools. Findings from schools with low parental involvement indicate that parents are not so supportive, show a lack of understanding of education and therefore do not often send their children to school. The six schools managed to identify, communicate, collaborate and work with a variety of partners to educate learners academically. The potential partners identified are categorised as follows: local business people; health care professionals; national service officers; spiritual leaders; individuals in the community ; government agencies; and traditional and community based authorities.

According to the findings, schools with high and low parental involvement work with a wider variety of partners than those schools with intermediate parental involvement. These two groups of schools make use of community resources and the skills and knowledge of community experts such as health care professionals, national service officers, traditional and community based authorities, and spiritual leaders. The schools with intermediate parental involvement cooperate with parents, the Ministry of Education and the individual teachers. Such cooperation is also preferred by those schools with high and low parental involvement. The possible explanation of why all schools make use of those partners may be explained by their greater visibility, availability, and familiarity (Sanders, 2001). Schools know that parents have obligations to make sure their children receive a proper education. Moreover, the schools' preference to liaise with the Ministry of Education may be due to the Ministry's obligation and commitment to fund public educational institutions.

The reliance on some partners only by schools with intermediate parental involvement may result in schools' underestimating, undervaluing and underutilising other potential partners who could also provide goods and services relevant to the needs of the school. Therefore, these schools need to learn more about available community resources and network with individuals within and outside their immediate geographic area to secure potential partners. Sanders (2001) advises that one of the best way for schools to do this is for professional educators to attend local community events and meetings.

Parental involvement could be a matter of perception of the roles of schools and parents as viewed by the professional educators. This could mean that what professional educators perceive as parents' roles and responsibilities influence what they expect from parents and what they ask parents do to support the academic education of learners. For example, parents may regard their involvement as being adequate, whereas professional educators regard it as being inadequate. It is worth exploring and clarifying what professional educators perceive as the roles and responsibilities of themselves and of the parents. The outcome of this part of the investigation may help

professional educators to appropriately apply parental involvement strategies to enhance home-school collaboration in the academic education of learners.

A consistent pattern is seen between the perceptions of professional educators regarding parental involvement and their claim towards practising this concept. This means that what professional educators think as involvement is what they practice. Moreover, according to the findings, it appears that there is a close agreement between teachers' reported activities and parents' reported activities. What parents reported as parental involvement practice is the same as what principals and teachers reported. In addition, most of the perceived indicators and claimed practised activities of involvement by professional educators focus on direct benefits to schools and parents. Very few focus on learners and communities. Most of the parents reported activities that they get more involved in activities that provide direct services to learners. Nevertheless, implementation of strategies which benefit parents and schools is regarded as the most important involvement (activities) for resource-poor schools (Sanders, 2001).

Many of the strategies practised by the three groups of schools are in line with the six types of involvement according to Epstein's framework (Epstein et al., 2002; Lindsay, 2001; Sanders, 2001; Sanders, 1999; Sanders & Epstein, 1998). According to Epstein (2001) research that has not considered the broad range of this framework has produced questionable analysis and interpretations. The analysis of the types and indicators of parental involvement practised by each group of studied rural lower primary schools is presented in 4.5.1.

Schools' perception of the concept parental involvement in academic education of learners is presented in subsection 4.3.4. Perceptions of professional educators of those schools with high and intermediate parental involvement referred to cooperation and good relationships between schools and parents, and participation of parents in school activities. However, schools with high parental involvement focused on the participation in lesson presentations, and provision of care to learners and their personal needs. Schools with intermediate parental involvement focused on the participation in lesson observations, and monitoring of the teaching by teachers and the attendance by learners. Perceptions of parental involvement by schools with low parental involvement are broader than schools with high and intermediate parental involvement. It referred to all aspects mentioned by the two groups of schools and added an aspect of the assistance of s assistance with children's home work.

Important strategies have emerged from the inquiry across the schools that were studied. Those strategies are worth increasing the knowledge base about involvement strategies which have been successfully practised in rural schools. All those studied schools' strategies of parental involvement, to a certain extent, covered what other researchers have recommended as strategies by which schools should be judged in relation to the degree of parental involvement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Epstein et al., 2002; Lapp et al., 2002; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lareau, 2001). Therefore, the findings reveal factors and indicators that qualify these schools to be regarded as practising parental involvement in the academic education of the learners. The following are a list of the factors that are perceived as important by the informants in assessing the degree of parental involvement as high, intermediate or low in a rural primary school:

- **Conducive climate** – schools serve meals for orphans and vulnerable children, reward hard working learners and parents, keep clean environments, are friendly and welcome the parents to the school, and have a democratic leadership style.
- **Provision of educational opportunities** – schools provide literacy classes; hold teacher-parent meetings mostly on subject teaching, learners' behaviour and learning performance. Parents are invited as guest speakers to meetings to talk about how and why it is important to provide for their children's needs. Individual teacher- parent workshops are held in which parents are guided on how they should help their children with reading at home.
- **Use of community resources** – Community members are invited to provide parents with information on how to be with children, and explain to them as well as to the learners how to prevent infection by HIV/AIDS and be with people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- **Provision of opportunities for technical support** – Involvement such as parents observing and assisting in teaching, supporting learners when doing home work, and preparing teaching and learning aids are all of utmost importance in the six schools which were the subject of the study.
- **Power sharing and involvement in decision- making bodies** – parents are appointed as members of school boards and other decision- making committees.

4.5 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FINDINGS OF PHASE 2 OF THE STUDY: QUALITATIVE

4.5.1 Interpretations of the findings of rural lower primary schools with high parental involvement

- **Perceptions of professional educators on parental involvement in academic education of learners**

The perceptions of parental involvement by the professional educators at high parental involvement schools are in accord with Bowen and Lee's (2006) view on parental involvement. Professional educators perceive this phenomenon as good relationship and cooperation of parents with teachers, participation in teaching, and assistance in learners' learning at home and at school. These activities of the parents support the objectives of promoting education of learners to make them literate, critical thinkers and independent problem solvers (Warren, 2005).

The perceptions of professional educators which refer to the participation of parents in teaching and assistance for homework activities imply that schools should implement involvement strategies that make them tap into the knowledge, skills and other resources of parents and community members (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Schools should exploit what parents are good at, to support the academic education of learners.

- **Perceptions of professional educators of the roles and responsibilities of schools and parents regarding parental involvement**

Professional educators regard the preparations of subject content and other activities which require professional expertise (like assessment and promotion) as the roles of professional educators. Parents are expected to perform tasks which prepare children to be ready for and enjoy learning at school and home. The findings of parents regarding taking care of children's physical needs and offering support in academic tasks are in line with some of the findings in the existing literature that indicate parents' collaborative efforts such as provision of resources and physical care to the learners, creating a positive school climate, and offering support in academic education related activities (Shah, 2001; Sanders, 2001; Hornby, 2000).

- **The practice of parental involvement in schools**

According to the findings from those schools with high parental involvement, professional educators associate involvement activities they practised at their schools with Epstein et al.'s (2002) types of involvement: parenting, communicating, learning at home, decision making, collaboration with the communities and volunteering. The Parenting type of involvement is recommended by other researchers because it makes parents become more effective teachers or tutors at home and learners gain academically (Epstein et al., 2002; Sanders and Epstein; 1998). Strategies like contributing to lesson presentations, ensuring what children do at school and assisting with

homework are considered more useful for educating parents and making them gain the necessary experience to assist schools and learners. This necessary experience make parents develop and activate other forms of input such as critical analysis skills that lead them to express new spaces for involvement in the schools.

The use of various forms of communication options and the invitation of the parents as guest speakers at teacher-parent meetings serve as a clear demonstration of communicating type of involvement. Demonstration of learning at home as a type of involvement practised by the schools is indicated by professional educators who show parents how they can assist their children with reading at home. The establishment of a sewing project in which community members were employed and remunerated, and the request for the community members to teach computer skills to the learners show the practice of collaboration with the community by the schools.

The findings reveal that those schools with high parental involvement practice broad parental involvement because such schools explored involvement activities across all types of involvement and demonstrate most of the indicators of parental involvement as indicated in Chapter 2 (2.8). Findings about the strategies practiced by schools with high parental involvement are discussed in subsection 4.3.2. Findings indicate the practice of setting a positive climate by schools. The practice of positive climate forms a foundation from which both schools and parents easily enter collaboration on a more equal footing. The findings reveal that the strategies of schools which employed parental involvement include those that help parents to develop literacy skills. Such skills can empower parents to take initiatives in school activities especially assisting learners with reading. Sanders and Epstein (1998) reason that parents who attend literacy classes develop love, confidence and a positive attitude towards involvement in schools and this influences the literacy performance of learners. Subject specific information for parents in reading helps many to become involved who would not otherwise do so. The idea implies that if parents assist learners with their earlier reading competencies, then this could significantly increase the reading skills of learners. Furthermore, the fact that teachers and parents talk about children's learning problems and about parents monitoring their children's completion of homework implies higher expectation by parents for their children performance at school. Parents with higher expectations tend to be involved in their children's learning.

The findings about the schools' identification and integration of resources and services from the community suggest that schools try to strengthen parents' belief in school. This practice motivates parents to continue supporting school activities. The practice by schools to provide the opportunity

for technical support indicates that schools respect parents as change agents for quality teaching of learners. Schools make decisions together with parents as the latter are encouraged to serve on the school board and other decision-making committees. This practice reflects decision-making type of involvement, which improves the parent teacher relations (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lindsay, 2001; Sanders, 2001). Furthermore, parents' representation on school boards and/or decision-making committees is an indicator of very democratic systems in schools which promote family-school connection for supporting learning (Sanders, 1998). Without the voice of parents in the schooling of their children, schools are at a disadvantage for academic education, and children are at risk of being miseducated (Olsen et al., 1994).

- **Schools' attitude towards parental involvement**

The findings suggest that parents are respected and their ideas are valued. Respect of parents by the schools gives them (parents) confidence. Being viewed as respected and important partners by professional educators gives parents a sense of belonging and responsibility within schools (Sanders, 1998).

4.5.2 Interpretations of the findings of rural lower primary schools with intermediate parental involvement

- **Perceptions of professional educators on parental involvement in academic education of learners**

The findings from those schools with intermediate parental involvement reveal that aims of involvement such as parents' visits to schools, encouragement of children to study hard and the intellectual development of learners are of interest to such schools. Furthermore, findings indicate that professional educators' understanding of parental involvement goes beyond parents attending meetings and doing classroom observations to include participation in school organisation and development. These goals are best achieved through cooperative action of schools and parents together with good relationships and mutual support. Warren (2005) argues that these qualities are resources which enable stakeholders to achieve collective objectives, namely the effective education of children.

- **Perceptions of professional educators of the roles and responsibilities of schools and parents regarding parental involvement**

When schools allow and encourage parents to become actively involved in various activities is regarded as the role of the school. The findings show that schools offer parents opportunities to acquire knowledge and build relationships with one another and with professional educators. This relationship makes parents and professional educators to work as a team for the academic education of learners. Creating a home environment that encourages learning, taking care of children's personal needs and communicating children's emotional and social feelings were perceived as some of the roles and responsibilities of parents. The value of the presence of parents at school pleases the learners and encourages them to work harder. To the professional educators in schools with intermediate parental involvement parental involvement is not interference but an encouragement in their (professional educators) practice and a booster of their morale. Charles-Welsh, Green and Howard (2004) maintain that schools which are pleased by the involvement of parents inspire parents to create an environment either at home or school that encourages learning. Professional educators' perceptions indicate their belief in ability of parents to monitor the child's learning at school and at home.

- **The practice of parental involvement in schools**

Schools with intermediate parental involvement practice 'parenting': they organise meetings for parents in which they give parents advice on how to assist children academically. Moreover, the practice of parenting at the two schools is further indicated by the schools' way of asking and/or allowing parents to observe teachers teaching and learners learning, and participating in lesson presentations has a positive effect on the sense of well-being of the learners. These same schools practise communicating as indicated by the use of various communication options. Strategies such as lesson observations, teaching and assisting children with homework makes parents find it easier to talk to teachers and ask questions. Being there for their children and when their children need them at home, in classrooms and in schools is a way of activating a particular kind of interactive capital (Lareau, 2001; Coleman, 1988). This activation of capital did not depend on high levels of traditional resources that these parents typically did not possess, but instead required only that parents be present, observant and willing to assist in classrooms. Moreover, "*parents develop more positive attitudes about the school, greater trust of school personnel and confidence in approaching the school and teachers, and increased attendance at parent-teacher meetings*" (Sanders, 2001: 491). By involving parents in various decision-making committees, these schools demonstrate the belief that parental rights to democratic participation in the schools cannot be separated from parent

involvement. Parents have the primary responsibility, best knowledge and deepest love for their children, therefore, they have the greatest need and right to a say in the schooling of their children (Olsen et al, 1994). When parents position themselves with their presence in their children's schools, they create capital out of resources or situations where status quo norms generally only recognise a deficit (Lareau, 2001).

The practice of schools with intermediate parental involvement seems to neglect the practice of creating positive climate to parental involvement. A positive climate towards parental involvement in the school is very crucial to the practice of parental involvement because it encourages and ensures communication between home and school.

- **Schools' attitude towards parental involvement**

The findings indicate that interaction meetings between professional educators and parents take place. Findings of parents suggest that through interaction meetings they are involved in the discussions aimed at the correction of the bad-behaviour of some learners and at establishing discipline, as well as correcting faults of professional educators. According to Warren (2005), meetings of parents and teachers provide a great chance to both groups to listen to each other and learn about each other's concerns. Meetings are opportunities in which professional educators make parents involved in cooperative as well as personal spaces within which they could locate and activate forms of capital more valued in schools (Barton et al., 2004). Interaction meetings and tolerance of criticisms of their practice by the professional educators indicate schools' positive attitude towards parental involvement. Constructive questioning of schools' practice by other stakeholders is regarded by the Critical theory as one of the strategies which influence the practice and policies of schools for the benefit of learners' academic education (Barton & Drake, 2002).

4.5.3 Interpretations of the findings of rural lower primary schools with low parental involvement

- **Perceptions of professional educators on parental involvement in academic education of learners**

Specifically, the key conceptual findings of the meaning of parental involvement from the perspective of professional educators at these schools reveal a dynamic and interactive process in which schools expect parents to draw on their multiple experiences and resources to form a relationship with schools and be engaged in school activities. Thus, professional educators'

explanations of parental involvement characterised this concept with the qualities and actions such as: good working relationship between schools and parents; classroom observations by parents; monitoring of learners' punctuality and attendance by parents; provision for learners' personal needs and care by parents; and assistance with learning at home by parents. The perspectives of parental involvement as a relationship and as actions by parents are supported by the findings of Barton et al. (2004) that regard parental involvement as a relational phenomenon that relies on networks of individuals and resources, and is indicated by what parents do.

The findings from all three groups of schools indicate perceptions and understanding of parental involvement in line with the description of this phenomenon by Barton et al. (2004) – the expressions and attempts by parents, however, supported and sometimes directed by schools to have an impact on what actually transpires around the children in schools and on the kinds of human, social, and material resources that are valued within schools. Professional educators' perceptions of academic education emphasise the development of the basic skills (i.e. reading, writing and numeracy) to lay the foundation for a child's future and self reliance. The future life of the learners depends on support for learning in schools and at home. Parents and schools should engage in cooperation and a positive relationship as well as mutually supportive activities to enhance learners' ability to learn (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Walker, 2006; Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005).

- **Perceptions of professional educators of the roles and responsibilities of schools and parents regarding parental involvement**

Creating an appealing atmosphere for involvement by giving welcoming reception to visiting parents is seen by professional educators as the role of schools. Warren (2005: 149) believe that *“if parents get involved through friendship, they have a foundation from which to enter collaboration on a more equal footing and this makes a better chance for them to exert authentic involvement.”* Furthermore, the findings indicate that professional educators believe that successful children have committed parents who provide for their physical needs, other needed learning materials and send them to school on a daily basis. It is other researchers' (Warren, 2005; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002) belief that children cannot learn well if they lack health care, nutrition and learning materials needed to support the teaching-learning process.

- **The practice of parental involvement in schools**

The findings from professional educators at schools with low parental involvement show that these two schools implement volunteering, communicating, decision making and collaborating with the

community. Evidence of these types of parental involvement is: professional educators visit parents at home and parents are given the freedom to visit schools at a time convenient to them. Professional educators and parents visiting each other indicate communication and the parents' freedom to visit the schools indicates a positive school climate. A good relationship prevails between professional educators and community members as demonstrated by the two schools' request for parents and community members to maintain school fences. This practice further shows the collaboration with the community type of involvement. Classroom observation by parents indicates the parenting type of involvement. This strategy greatly benefits parents and eases the burden of academic education on schools. Through observation parents learn and become able to contribute a wealth of talent to the learners (Hornby, 2000). Decision-making and power -sharing is also practised when these schools make parents members of school boards and other committees. Schools thereby implement the idea of the rights of parents to participate in decisions that affect their children's educational experiences. For schools with low parental involvement, this idea includes discussions about learners' absenteeism and latecoming, as well as the roles and responsibilities of schools and parents. Moreover, parents are encouraged to participate in teaching and assist children with homework which reflects the volunteering type of involvement. According to Sanders and Epstein (1998), volunteering is recommended because parents learn more about what their children are learning, the teacher's job and problems, as well as the classroom life.

The findings from schools across the three groups indicate the positions of parents as being what Carreon, Drake and Barton (2005: 492) refer to as '*strategic helpers*' and '*listeners*'. The findings show that schools manage to give parents a voice in the formal and informal spaces. When parents are given opportunities for doing teaching and learning observations in classrooms or participating in other teaching or parent-related school events this demonstrates parents as strategic helpers in the formal space. Daily assistance with children's homework activities and helping them with reading at home also demonstrates parents as strategic helpers in the informal school activities. Limited attendance of meetings for parents, limited participation in parent related school academic events and daily conversations with their children about school demonstrate parents as listeners. Through these activities, and working in cooperation, schools and parents try to bridge the gap between home and school, which linkage is crucial for children's learning (Heneveld & Craig, 1996).

- **Schools' attitude towards parental involvement**

Other findings indicate that teachers in rural schools hold 'deficit' views of parents, and therefore, reserve their respect for them and their contributions to education of the learners (Walker, 2006; Sanders, 2001). On the contrary, this study's findings revealed the efforts by professional educators

to build trust and foster a meaningful collaboration with parents. The findings show the mutual trust and interpersonal relationships between schools and parents which have been initiated by the professional educators. Although the attitude of some parents toward their obligations in terms of supporting schools has interfered with the initiatives of professional educators, the findings of parents in general indicate an appreciation of their conduct and attitude by professional educators.

4.5.4 Reports by professional educators and parents of barriers and difficulties that were experienced in the process of parental involvement practice at their schools

Interpretation of barriers and causes experienced by the three groups of schools is presented in one sub-section because of the many similarities and overlapping views between the findings across the groups. Although convincing information and evidence of how schools practise parental collaboration and involvement is reported by professional educators, implementing and sustaining such collaboration is not without barriers. There were barriers at schools that needed to be addressed so that effective parental involvement could be implemented. The barriers are presented in 4.3.6.

While few professional educators could explain how they addressed those difficulties, most of them avoided that question or asked me to continue with the next question during the interviews. This finding serves as clear evidence that despite some schools' attempts to implement strategies to address the experienced barriers to parental involvement (as reported in 4.3.7), most schools are either struggling or do not know how to go about addressing some of these barriers. At the same time there is no acknowledgement or little knowledge and/or inability to do that from schools.

These findings suggest the urgency of creating practices and structures that address barriers to the implementation of parental involvement in lower primary schools in rural areas. Schools need to build a social support network in order to acquire the 'how to' knowledge needed for addressing these barriers. This study's empirical evidence supports other researchers' (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005) findings that the major common problems in many rural areas are caused by poverty, lack of resources, illiteracy and lack of understanding. Problems such as lack of education and understanding of parents, and illiteracy go hand in hand with lack of stimulation in homes, reduced ability of parents to support their children's academic education and so learners experience lack of support for learning at home.

Other factors such as undervaluing the lower primary phase, prejudice, stereotyping, and HIV/AIDS illustrate the dilemma of schools that want more parent involvement but find it challenging because of the realities of parents' circumstances. Although these factors are acknowledged as genuine concerns in rural schools, in the end it depends on how the schools try to handle these challenges not to discourage the possibility of parental involvement. Beck and Murphy (1999) argue that the measure of a school's practice of parental involvement is not the absence of struggles in this effort, but rather the way in which professional educators and parents address problems and persist in spite of them.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The analysis of qualitative data on the practice of parental involvement by six rural lower primary schools in the Ohangwena region revealed that most schools seem to have explored involvement activities that are regarded as important for high- need and poor resource schools in at risk communities (Warren, 2005; Sanders, 2001) to benefit the academic aspect of learners' education and to improve learners' learning.

Interestingly though, parents expressed little discomfort with the ways they were treated and involved in their children's academic education by schools. Indeed, most felt very welcome at schools and offered service, suggestions and ideas that were acted upon by the schools. However, their suggestions for more involvement strategies they would like to do should be a warning to schools that they (schools) still need to do more for the implementation of substantial involvement.

In Chapter 5 the most important aspects from the literature reviewed and of both the quantitative and qualitative research will be integrated and discussed. Critical reflections, limitations and strengths of the study, as well as recommendations and indications for future research based on the findings will be put forward.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, CRITICAL REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature presents compelling evidence of a positive correlation between parent involvement in the education of learners and an increase in learners' learning and achievement. The literature further indicates a strong relationship between poor practices or difficulty in practising parental involvement and parents' socio-economic background. Therefore, parental involvement is reported in the literature as being difficult to implement in rural schools and its practices are less likely to take root in schools that serve rural and low-income populations than in schools that serve urban and high-income populations. Some of the major conclusions from findings of various studies on parental involvement indicated in the literature include the following: professional educators in rural schools want to involve parents more but they do not know the best ways to do so; schools regard parental involvement as a problem because parents do not show support for schools (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002); implementation of parental involvement in low socio-economic status areas meets a lack of parental support and resistance (Lapp et al., 2002; Sanders, 2001); and whenever parents are involved, they are more involved in non-academic spaces (Henneveld & Craig, 1996).

These long-held assumptions and traditional parental involvement conclusions do not seem to recognise parental involvement activities in rural schools nor the knowledge and resources of poor parents. The practice of parental involvement in rural schools is regarded as subordinate. Such beliefs imply that rural communities lack the knowledge, skills and network resources to create activities and strategies that have the potential to make a difference in children's educational development. Furthermore, the conclusions indicate very little (if ever) information on whether attempts were made to find out how possible parental involvement strategies could be encouraged and sustained in rural schools. Documented information about the recognition of the existing activities and strategies of parental involvement in rural schools is not widely available, especially in Namibia.

The existing conclusions in the literature about parental involvement are more than enough to warn rural schools to handle the theory of traditional parental involvement practice with care. The Critical theory encourages intellectual engagement with such form of oppressive beliefs. Critical

Theory argues that some research results should not be accepted as correct and unquestionable (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Therefore, the current study attempted to critically analyse whether and how rural lower primary schools in Namibia involve parents in the academic education of learners, and generated knowledge that challenges some of these oppressive ideologies.

In Chapter 2 (Sub-section 2.4) I affirm that I lend my support to other research claims that parents across different social classes have the ability and unique capital to support the education of their children and highly value the education of their children. It is that quality of parental involvement among low socio-economic status parents and schools that this study tried to critically examine and expose. The study investigated and can reveal to rural lower primary schools the processes, strategies and activities they can perpetuate to keep themselves working successfully with parents to encourage the academic education of learners.

A mixed method design was chosen to direct this study. Research questions were formulated to investigate and establish responses that could be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. The reflective thinking emerging from the literature review resulted in the formulation of propositions. Quantitative research questions which directed Phase 1 of the study were asked to test the propositions. I postulated that rural lower primary schools practise parental involvement in ways that are possible in their contexts and that it would be exhibited by the following indicators: conducive climate for parental support; provision of educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement to parents and teachers; use of community resources and knowledge of community experts; provision of opportunities for technical support (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) for classroom activities to parents; use of various options to communicate with parents; involvement of parents in school policy formulation and school governance; professional educators' positive attitude towards involvement; schools' understanding and valuing of involvement; and addressing sources of conflict between parents and school staff. Therefore, the propositions say that according to the perceptions of professional educators, schools with high, average or low ratings on the above-mentioned indicators of parental involvement will have high, intermediate or low parental involvement practice respectively (see Section 3.3 for the detailed formulations and presentations of the propositions).

The statistical analysis of Phase 1 data grouped schools into three groups (high, intermediate and low). Six schools were identified across all the three groups to be studied in-depth during Phase 2 of this study. Of the six schools, two were identified from schools which indicated a high practice of parental involvement (Schools A and B), two were identified from schools which indicated an

intermediate practice of parental involvement (Schools C and D) and two were identified from schools which indicated a low practice of parental involvement (Schools E and F).

The quantitative approach has limited possibilities for exploring parental involvement in a natural setting and provided me with the understanding of the meaning professional educators attach to it in order to define that part of their reality as professionals. Therefore, qualitative questions were also asked in order for the study to make an in-depth investigation of the professional educators' and parents' definitions of the reality they live. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methodological research supplemented by the literature review revealed the findings that are presented in this chapter. The aim of the current study is to critically analyse whether and how rural lower primary schools in Namibia involve parents in the academic education of their children. The research questions which directed the entire study were:

- How is parental involvement perceived and practised by professional educators to support learners' academic education in rural lower primary schools?
- How do parents demonstrate their parental involvement in the education of their children?
- How do lower primary schools with high parental involvement organise their involvement strategies and activities differently from schools with intermediate and low parental involvement in rural Namibia?
- What barriers to parental involvement do rural lower primary schools in Namibia experience?
- How do rural lower primary schools in Namibia deal with factors that challenge their efforts to involve parents in learners' academic education?

The objectives were:

- To explore the perceptions of and thoughts about parental involvement among lower primary schools and the extent to which those schools in northern Namibia involve parents in their children's academic education;
- To explore how parents demonstrate their parental involvement in the education of their children;
- To conduct a study that critically analyses and identifies how schools with high parental involvement organise their activities differently from schools with low parental involvement in rural Namibia; and

- To identify, critically analyse and describe the ways in which lower primary schools deal with barriers that affect schools' efforts to involve parents in the academic education of learners.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The provision of free education proclaimed in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (December, 1991) implies the promotion of education for all, expansion of access to education and improvement in the quality of education in schools. The provision of quality education allows for the recognition of educational benefits arising from parental involvement in the education of their children. The government encourages schools to aim for the provision of quality education and learners' high academic achievement. Hence, the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia strongly supports the practice of parental involvement in the education of learners by schools (MEC, 1993).

5.2.1 Perceptions about parental involvement

According to the literature review, parental involvement is perceived as an approach to improve the quality of education (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004; MEC, 1993). Its rationale is rooted in the belief that in order for schools to educate children effectively, parents and families should become fully involved in the process of educating learners (Rothstein, 2005; Sanders & Epstein, 1998; MEC, 1993). Parental involvement occurs when schools bring together multiple resources and complementary learning support, including parental support, and build on their strengths to promote children's learning and school success (Rothstein, 2005; Brown, 2001). Schooling improves when a variety of resources (e.g. professional educators, parents and other community members) share and combined their talents and benefits (Kakli, Kreider & Ross, 2005). Moreover, parental involvement is regarded as a meaningful, respectful and authentic relationship which schools and parents co-construct. It is a means that schools can use to convey a sense of parental rights and responsibilities within the school to parents.

5.2.2 Critical and Ecological theories and parental involvement

The other understanding of parental involvement gained from the literature review is based on the tenets of Ecological Theory. One of the premises of this theory is that the child's world is an interrelated series of nested environmental systems and resources which influence each other and

within which a child learns and develops (Barton et al., 2004). The Ecological Theory regards both parents and schools as valuable contributors to children's learning, both at home and at school.

Critical Theory criticises traditional parental involvement and claims that schools tend to maintain the beliefs of a capitalist culture, positioning the space, capital, resources and cultures of poor families as inferior (Creswell, 2003). The assumption of the capitalist culture about parental involvement regards parents from rural contexts and poor backgrounds as lacking the knowledge, skills and network of resources to know how to enter into the kinds of conversations and activities that make a difference in the educational development of their children (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Hammond, 2001). Valencia (1997, in Lee and Bowen, 2006) argues that this kind of deficit perspective, not only devalues the educational involvement shown by parents from poor backgrounds, but also takes attention away from the professional responsibility of schools to establish effective parental involvement activities for those parents. Critical Theory challenges beliefs that reproduce oppressive ideologies (Henning, Van Rensberg & Smit, 2004). This oppression remains if disadvantaged people accept their social status as natural, inevitable and inviolable (Briton, 1996). Until such a time that researchers study contextually-based parental involvement in rural schools and recognise the current initiatives of parental involvement practice, rural schools will be seen as unable to implement involvement, and rural parents will be viewed as deficient educators. Thus, the schools are cautioned against the generally accepted knowledge and should handle that knowledge with care (Leonardo, 2004; Creswell, 1998).

5.2.3 Cultural and social capital and the importance of parental involvement

According to Lee and Bowen (2006), Brubaker (2004) and Lareau (2001), social capital is a means by which parents promote the school achievement and educational attainment of their children through visits to the schools and interaction with other parents at school and by attending parent meetings, providing attention to children's personal needs, engaging in volunteer activities, providing help with homework, and discussing school work and experiences with their children.

When parents possess cultural capital, it magnifies the effects of parental involvement and makes them procure additional capital that promotes children's academic enhancement (Lee & Bowen, 2006). When parents are involved at school, it promotes the connections between them and the schools and creates congruence in behaviours, values and attitudes across children's micro-systems. Parental involvement guarantees quality education (Chapman & Aspin, 1997). It improves learning

and performance of learners because the families of learners are considered as crucial factors in their children's education. The more parents are involved, the better understanding and knowledgeable they become about the school programme and about the teachers' roles. School activities which involve parents make it more pleasant, productive, and secure for learners. Parents develop positive attitudes towards teachers and their teaching, and develop strong confidence in the school (Stern, 2003). Parental involvement sends a strong message to the learners about the importance of schooling, safety, and punctuality. It creates an atmosphere of trust and cooperation and strengthens the relationship between home and school (Wright & Steglin, 2003).

5.2.4 Foundations of parental involvement

The premises that constitute the foundation of parental involvement are the doctrine of parents' rights, the family influences on the child and the democratic process. These premises constitute the foundation for providing accessibility, quality and equality of learning opportunities for all children of all races and social classes. According to Holmes (1998), professional educators in schools used to feel that their status was undermined when parents tried to get involved in their children's education. As a reaction, parents decided to fight for their rights. Moreover, from the pedagogical perspective, low achievement rate, especially among poor and marginalised children, has led educators to change their attitude and become more aware of the importance of parental involvement for learners' quality learning in the education process. From the political perspective, the realisation of democracy and empowerment of all stakeholders in education contributed to the development of this important educational approach. On the other hand, economists argue that education of the child becomes a heavy undertaking if it is left on the shoulders of schools alone. Therefore, for schools to provide learners' effective and successful education, the establishment of democracy and empowerment of marginalised parents to collaborate with professional educators is needed.

5.2.5 Indicators of parental involvement

The literature review (Epstein et al., 2002; Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Shah, 2001; Henneveld & Craig, 1996) inter alia, identified the following as indicators of parental involvement: the linking of schools to community resources; facilitating opportunities for parents to provide schools with financial and/or material support; open, frequent and various communication options between schools and parents; allowing parents to

participate in academic learning related activities; involving parents in policy formulation and school governance; providing parents with educational and knowledge development opportunities; supporting a good and strong relationship between schools and parents; creating a positive school climate; requiring professional educators to have positive perceptions and attitudes towards parental involvement; consulting teacher training programmes for teachers in-service education about how to involve parents in the education of learners; defining staff members as liaisons between schools and parents; and developing a process for resolving conflicts between parents and school staff.

5.2.6 Challenges and common barriers associated with parental involvement in rural schools

The literature identified common barriers to the practice of parental involvement in primary schools. Among these are increased distances between professional educators and parents; illiteracy, isolation, poverty, unemployment; low achieving children; lack of understanding and knowledge about each other's roles and responsibilities; time constraints; parents' negative experiences with schooling; school climates which are not conducive to parental involvement; and professional educators' negative attitudes towards parental involvement.

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

I agree that rural schools experience some challenges in the processes of implementing parental involvement in education of learners. However, this study provides support for my reservations about the conventional belief that this approach to education is difficult if not impossible to implement and take root in rural schools. While I acknowledge the generalisations of the findings, I also knew that, as a researcher, I had to investigate and understand the practice of parental involvement in Namibia's rural schools from within, i.e. from the professional educators and parents who live this life. I believed that if they shared their experiences of the reality they live with me, then I might challenge or redefine this conventional beliefs.

The framework of this study has been influenced by Ecological and Critical Theories. Ecological Theory views the child's world as a series of nested environmental resources that influence each other and within which the child learns and develops. The same theory further regards parents and schools as valuable contributors to the child's learning, at home and at school. It is commonly held that parents regardless of their social class want the best for their children. Therefore, this study is

rooted in a framework that states that in order for schools to educate children effectively, parents and families should become involved in the process of educating learners. I lend my support to an African proverb which says, ‘It takes a village to educate a child’. This proverb implies that all complementary learning support in which parents are included should contribute to the school endeavours to educate children. Complimentary support fosters school success and improvement. Successful schools and successful learners have parents who are involved. Critical Theory cautions against generally accepted knowledge and oppressive ideologies about parental involvement that are positioned to inhibit and suppress already economically disempowered schools’ practice of democracy. The same theory recommends for rural schools to believe in the application of a Freirian approach, characterised by an educational philosophy of pedagogy for democratic schools. Pedagogy for democratic schools implies recognition of indigenous ways and ability to support learning and the value of aspirations, knowledge and skills of all stakeholders in which parents are included. People involved in rural schools should not fold their arms and believe that what other researchers found is final and natural. Rural schools should stand up and liberate themselves from the hopeless idea that it is difficult for them to involve parents in the education of their children.

5.3.1 Summary of the results of the quantitative study

- **Demographic profile of the respondents and schools which participated in the investigation**

The research was conducted in Oshiwambo. One hundred and forty six professional educators responded to the questionnaire. The ages of respondents ranged from 24 to 59 years. The qualifications of the respondents ranged from a two-year certificate to a five-year postgraduate degree. The most frequently reported qualification was the three-year certificate. The number of years in the teaching profession of the respondents ranged from 1 to 35. The school with the lowest number of learners had 43 and the school with the highest number had 960 learners. Perceptions about parental involvement were sought through two research questions at Phase 1 of this study. Summary of the results of each of the research questions is presented below.

Research question: *How is parental involvement perceived and practised by professional educators to support learners’ academic education in rural lower primary schools?*

Professional educators’ perceptions of parental involvement indicate that the establishment of Teacher-Parent Organisations and functioning of school board committees at schools are indicators

of this phenomenon. The findings suggest that Teacher-Parent Organisations should be responsible for discipline, health and counselling of staff members, parents and learners. This organisation should take the responsibility for contributing to the development of management and quality assurance of schools. School boards should manage schools, control discipline and provide security for schools. Perceptions of the respondents further show that parental involvement in schools should focus on communication and strong relationships between schools and parents, use of community resources by the schools, participation and support of school activities by parents and the provision of children's needs by parents.

Perceptions of professional educators indicate that rural, lower primary schools:

- **create a conducive climate for parental involvement**

The perceptions of the professional educators indicate an open, warm, inviting and productive school climate as they describe the sites of their schools as clean and well maintained. Respondents perceive their school environments as safe for teachers, parents and learners. Parents are free to visit schools in their free time. According to Warren (2005) this freedom encourages parents to come to the school and give support even when they have not been formally invited.

- **provide parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement**

Schools hold meetings in which teachers and parents discuss the importance of parental involvement, parents' roles and responsibilities, and specific subject curricula. Parents of children with behavioural problems are provided with counselling services. Through these activities, parents develop a sense of efficacy, pride and confidence to support their children's academic education (Warren, 2005; Epstein et al., 2002; Sanders & Epstein, 1998).

- **use community resources to support school activities**

Some schools use community members as interpreters and invite community members for fundraising events. This recognition of community members as interpreters and committees members symbolises respect and value for parents' knowledge and skills as well as clear communication between schools and parents.

- **provide parents with opportunities for technical support for classroom activities**

Many schools ask parents to monitor children's school work at home. When parents monitor and support learners' homework, it enhances their children's effective learning. Some schools invite parents for lesson observations, contributions to lesson presentations and fund raising activities.

- **use various communication options**

It was found that rural schools use communication strategies which are not burdensome to either teachers or parents. Those strategies of communication are traditional (letter writing, meetings and parent days) yet effective. Telephones, home-school diaries and home visits were rarely, if ever, used by many schools.

- **involve parents in decision making and power-sharing activities**

Schools are ready to listen to parents' ideas as they invite parents to serve on school boards and other school development committees. This practice reflects that schools create equality of knowledge and operate from within a culture of democracy.

- **show a respectful attitude towards parental involvement**

The attitude of professional educators towards parental involvement was found to be welcoming, respectful, co-operative and satisfactory. They regard parental involvement as an approach to contribute to the administration and quality of the schools. Professional educators value the unique skills and support of parents in assisting with the school work of their children at home. These findings show openness in the attitude of professional educators towards parental involvement.

Research question: *What barriers to parental involvement do rural lower primary schools in Namibia experience?*

From the data collected at Phase 1 of this study, the following **barriers to parental involvement** were listed: parents' fear of responsibilities, lack of confidence, illiteracy, lack of time, insufficient positive responses to the invitations for parents' meetings, and insufficient provision of literacy education classes.

5.3.2 Summary of the findings of the qualitative study

All six schools were situated in poor communities in which many community members were unemployed and uneducated. However, some members of the communities understood the importance of education and, therefore, expected schools to give quality education to their children.

High parental involvement schools were found organising some involvement activities that were different from other schools' (intermediate and low) activities. The difference of parental involvement practice between intermediate and low parental involvement was not prominent. However, this finding does not disqualify the results from Phase 1 (quantitative) data that indicated the two schools (E and F) as of lower involvement than schools C and D which were found to be average, but rather confirms the reality and essence of the qualitative approach to this research which was conducted after the quantitative study. The qualitative inquiries (Phase 2) went beyond the quantitative descriptive information to give an explanation and conduct an in-depth investigation to present participants' experience of reality (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Other researchers agree that the qualitative data presents the accounts of insiders as the accounts of reality (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005).

Research question: *How is parental involvement perceived and practised by professional educators in supporting learners' academic education in rural lower primary schools?*

Interviews conducted among the professional educators reported findings which indicate that they perceive parental involvement in academic education of learners as: parents cooperating with teachers; parents participating in lesson observations and presentations; parents assisting their children with school work at home; parents providing their children with stationery, health care, child care and other basic needs; parents visiting schools; parents monitoring learners' punctuality and attendance; and parents encouraging learners to study hard.

Professional educators perceive the following as the roles and responsibilities of schools: daily lesson planning and preparations; making sure that learners are taught according to the prescribed curricula; assessment of learners' learning, grading and promotion of learners; ascertaining whether learners have the needed learning materials in class; and visiting parents at home. Sending children to school; supporting schools financially; advising schools; assisting children when doing school work at home; providing learners' personal and school needs; contributing to the creation of a

positive school climate; and motivating teachers and boosting their morale are all believed to be the roles and responsibilities of parents.

In relation to the practice of parental involvement, findings indicated that rural lower primary schools:

- **provide a conducive climate for parental involvement**

Schools invite parents to visit the schools during their own free time. Professional educators visit parents at home, work with parents as friends and make them welcome at school.

- **provide parents with educational opportunities for knowledge-development about parental involvement**

Parents are invited to do classroom observations and participate in teaching. Teacher-parent meetings are held at schools to discuss the following: the importance of education, cooperation between parents and teachers, the influence of absenteeism and late-coming of learners on their performance, roles and responsibilities of parents in their children's education, and other school needs. Parents are shown how to assist their children with school work, especially reading at home, and they are provided with literacy education classes.

- **use community resources to support school activities**

Members of the communities serve on various school management and development committees (e.g. school board and fund raising). They are invited as guest speakers at parent-teacher meetings. They support teachers in teaching curricula content which teachers found challenging (e.g. culture-related content). Community members are invited to advise parents and share with them how to be with children. Health professionals disseminate information about HIV and AIDS to parents, learners and professional educators. Moreover, schools seek financial support from non-governmental organisations and community members.

- **provide parents with opportunities for technical support for classroom activities**

Schools encourage parents to participate in lesson observations and teaching, do informal assessment of learning at home and assist their children with homework. Professional educators seek advice from parents on what to do about learning problems in specific subjects.

- **use various communication options**

The following communication options were found to be used by schools in making contact with parents for the sake of learners' academic education: meetings, letters, parent days, radio, headmen and councillors, churches as well as learners themselves.

- **involve parents in decision-making and power sharing activities**

Schools involve parents in the process of making decisions so that parents own the decisions. Findings show that schools use avenues such as school boards and other school development projects for generating money and committees for dealing with lower primary issues such as poor performing learners, discipline and codes of conduct to share leadership and decision-making with parents.

- **show a positive attitude towards parental involvement**

Good and polite behaviours and mutual respect between parents and professional educators, as well as cooperation and a good relationship characterised schools' attitude towards parental involvement.

Research question: *How do parents demonstrate their parental involvement in the education of their children?*

Important findings of how schools involve parents in the academic education of learners were identified through the parents' views. Parents affirm that they send their children to school on a daily basis; provide their children with school stationery; share their knowledge with learners in classrooms and at home; advise teachers and school leaders; donate awards for hardworking learners; serve on school boards and other school development committees; visit schools; assist children with homework; and encourage children to study hard.

Parents also expressed what they perceive as the importance of parental involvement: encouragement of teachers to work hard; improvement of the performance of learners; support for newly qualified and inexperienced teachers; development of good relationships between teachers and parents; and the guarantee of a better future for learners. Therefore, parents would like to be allowed to do more lesson observations, participate in teaching, provide whatever they can afford to, and monitor lesson planning and preparations of teachers.

Research question: ***How do lower primary schools with high parental involvement organise their involvement activities differently from schools with intermediate and low parental involvement in rural Namibia?***

Although the findings of intermediate and low parental involvement schools mostly indicate similar practices of involvement activities, high parental involvement schools indicate some different activities of involvement. High parental involvement schools:

- provide direct services to learners which pleases parents (e.g., selling school uniforms at a much lower price to learners; giving free uniforms to orphans and vulnerable children; and providing free lunches to orphans and vulnerable children).
- seek financial support from non-governmental organisations.
- discuss with parents about the importance of parents asking their children what they learn at school on a daily basis.
- provide literacy education classes.
- create projects (e.g. sewing project) in which parents and other community members were employed.
- provide and seek advice on how to deal with slow learners and other children with problems.
- advise parents about the importance of feeding their children before they come to school.
- teachers for different grades show parents how to assist their children with reading at home.

Research question: ***What barriers to parental involvement do rural lower primary schools in Namibia experience?***

During Phase 2 of this study barriers that constrain parental involvement in substantive academic education were explored and strategies for overcoming these barriers were described. Parents' priorities of issues other than the education of their children (e.g household chores and other personal business); lack of electricity at schools; insufficient and improper infrastructure; lack of financial support; ignorance and insufficient participation in meetings by parents; estranged relationships; and lack of school policies on parental involvement were found to be the major barriers interfering with the practice of parental involvement by rural lower primary schools. Lack of and/or limited understanding and knowledge; unemployment; poverty; inability of elderly parents to assist in school activities; and illiteracy among parents were also found as the causes for barriers by rural lower primary school level.

Research question: *How do rural lower primary schools in Namibia deal with factors that challenge their efforts to involve parents in learners' academic education?*

It was further found that most of the schools do not know how to address the barriers they experience. Additionally, a few schools organise fund raising projects or advise parents on the possibilities of generating money in order to contribute to the school development fund. Schools try to make parents understand their roles and responsibilities and what is expected from them for the promotion of academic learning.

5.3.3 Propositions

As stated in Chapter 3, three propositions were tested in this study. They are presented here in condensed form. The propositions presupposed that according to the perceptions of the teachers and principals, schools would receive either **high** ratings, **average** ratings or **low** ratings on each of the following - conducive climates for parental support, provision of educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement to parents, use of community resources and funds, knowledge of community experts and the parents of learners, provision of opportunities for technical support for classroom activities to parents, use of options to communicate with parents, involvement of parents in power sharing and decision making, and positive attitudes towards involvement. Schools were then determined to have **high**, **middle** or **low** parental involvement (See Chapter 3, Section 3.3).

This study formulated *a priori* propositions. This means that the propositions were stated before the data were collected. The schools A and B were found dissimilar from school C, D, E and F in their practice of parental involvement. Therefore, the decision was made during the analysis of data to accept and support the propositions. The original propositions were accepted because the probabilistic evidence obtained from the data provided an appropriate level of support. During Phase 1 of this study I found an agreement between increased or decreased parental involvement and the perceptions, practices and attitudes of professional educators. Schools A and B were found to be practising high parental involvement, i.e. the two schools involve parents prominently more than the other four schools (C, D, E and F). Schools C and D were found to practise an average level of parental involvement, i.e. the two schools' involvement of parents was found less than in schools A and B but more prominently than in schools E and F. Schools E and F were found to be practising low parental involvement, the two schools' involvement of parents was found less in Schools A, B, C and D.

5.3.4 Attainment of aim and objectives

Empirical support of whether and how rural lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region practise parental involvement was found. The findings of Phases 1 and 2 of this study show the empirical evidence that there is also a strong agreement between the positive perceptions of participants and the increased practice of parental involvement in rural lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region. This association was indicated by the findings from the professional educators that they created open, accepting, respectful, warm, inviting, cleaner and productive climate for parental involvement; provided parents with educational opportunities for knowledge development of parental involvement; made use of community resources as well as various communication options; provided parents with opportunities for technical support for classroom activities; and involved parents in decision making and power sharing activities which were found to be related to increased parental involvement.

Moreover, there is no consistent support for the claims that parental involvement is difficult, if not impossible, to practise in rural schools. To a certain extent the findings of this study indicate a level of success in the implementation of parental involvement in the education of learners in many aspects of involvement. In addition, although I agree to a certain extent with the literature that some rural schools struggle to involve parents in the education of their learners, I would like to emphasise that rural lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region practise the parental involvement strategies which are possible in their contexts.

However, the findings presented are worthy of recognition, albeit not without acknowledgement of the barriers experienced. Professional educators and parents expressed dissatisfaction with some parents' discouraging behaviours and laissez-faire attitudes towards parental involvement. Parent background variables (lack of understanding, illiteracy, lack of income, ignorance) were found related to the roots of barriers to involvement in rural lower primary schools. The difficulties that are experienced in some aspects of involvement are caused by the living standard of the communities in which schools are situated and the educational background of the residents of the community. Creation of fundraising projects, provision of advice to parents by the professional educators and community members; explanations of roles and responsibilities, creation of inviting and productive climate for involvement, and making use of community resources, are some of the strategies schools can use to address barriers to parental involvement.

The chosen sentiments and opinions expressed by the principals and teachers in Phase 1 describing what happened at their schools as well as the actual activities reported as performed by participants in Phase 2 indicate that parental involvement is evident in most of the lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region. The perception of professional educators fits the conceptual framework under which parental involvement in schools is seen through an ecological perspective.

To sum up, there are a number of things that rural lower primary schools do to promote parental involvement.

- Schools position and engage parents and various community members (e.g. health care professionals, spiritual leaders, traditional and community-based authorities) within various spaces. However, while schools try to involve parents, some parents are not motivated and do not show interest in creating authentic and productive spaces in schools.
- Professional educators' perceptions, attitudes and opinions of parental involvement are powerful examples of understanding of this phenomenon in rural lower primary schools and this understanding is not unlike most of what they and parents have reported as having experienced through practice.
- Professional educators at lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region have a positive attitude towards involvement.
- Schools convene meetings, engage parents in authentic conversations, facilitate opportunities for parents to share their concerns and listen to suggestions parents make about professional educators' mistakes. Schools make efforts to respond to parents' ideas and corrections, and encourage them to actively take part in conversations for the benefit of learners' academic education.
- Schools require parents to volunteer at the school and encourage parents to visit classrooms and provide technical support for classroom and other school activities.
- Schools link their work to community resources, and provide parents with avenues to develop as organisers and leaders by involving them in various committees.
- Schools provide orphans and vulnerable children with food at school.
- Some schools offer literacy classes. However, female parents are more involved than male parents.

- Schools build trust, respect and strong relationships with parents.
- Schools direct parents in working with their children at home, and provide them with support on parenting.
- Teachers provide subject-specific information to parents to activate the needed capital and for parents to develop understanding and learn skills to assist learning at home.
- Schools seek financial support from local business people and other community members.
- Schools use simple and affordable communication options to parents, and they translate for parents who do not understand and speak the official language (English).

5.4 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

5.4.1 The study's contribution to the existing knowledge-base of parental involvement in rural lower primary schools

A valuable contribution to the literature was made by this study. Many researchers reported discouraging findings of parental involvement practices in rural schools and among parents from economically stressed backgrounds. Refuting the prevailing deficit perspective and generally acceptable belief that rural schools and parents do not practise parental involvement, this study provides evidence that rural lower primary schools have strategies in place that proved to be effective in promoting parental involvement in the academic education of their children. This study identified many aspects in which rural, lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region succeeded in involving parents in the promotion of the academic learning of their children. Those aspects are worthy and serve as examples for other rural, lower primary schools (within and outside the Ohangwena Region) attempting to practise parental involvement in the academic education of their learners.

Professional educators and parents in rural schools are encouraged to become free of oppressive ideas about poor practices or difficulty in practising parental involvement in rural schools by not accepting the view of conventional studies as natural, inviolable and truer than any other perspective. This is no absolute knowledge they can grasp unquestionably (Mertens, 2003). Those perspectives may be an ideological hegemony expressed to produce consent to the status quo.

This kind of deficit perspective not only devalues parental involvement exhibited by rural schools but undermines the educational involvement activities exhibited by rural parents. Moreover, this perspective also suppresses, demoralises, and discourages rural schools from taking up this very important professional responsibility of implementing parental involvement.

Recognising and appreciating the existing efforts and attempts made by rural schools, no matter how little or trivial they are, would encourage them to do more as far as parental involvement is concerned. Suggestions for improving the ways in which rural schools practise parental involvement instead of reporting what rural schools are not able to do with the living conditions in which they find themselves should be given priority in research on parental involvement. Failure to recognise and appreciate their existing efforts of parental involvement may become psychological barriers to both professional educators and parents in rural areas.

Rural schools in Ohangwena Region tried to apply the pedagogy for democracy and create possible strategies and activities of parental involvement. Professional educators facilitate the co-construction of strong, productive and respectful relationships between home and educational setting and share power over educational activities with parents. Research findings which conclude that involvement of less educated and impoverished parents is dim are to be handled with care if they are not to be referred to as inappropriate. It seems that there is a growing interest of rural schools in implementing parental involvement. Parental involvement activities performed in rural lower primary schools are worthy of recognition as they demonstrate the fact that the role of parents is valued in rural schools and inspires them to become sites of resistance to oppressive ideas.

Although not all, many rural parents have high aspirations for their children and are positive, confident and optimistic about the ability of teachers and schools to contribute to a better life for their children. High hopes and optimism of parents about their children's education have the potential to raise their (parents) interest and willingness to promote parental involvement in schools. Parental interest influences their attitude to become positive towards supporting school activities. When parents show confidence in school activities, it influences professional educators' perceptions of their own competency and about parent support itself. I consider these positive feelings as contributions to effective parental involvement.

Rural parents in Ohangwena Region expressed concern about the efforts of the schools to engage them (parents) in school activities, especially teaching culture-related subject contents, which is another indication of interest and willingness to support their children's education. Additionally,

positive attitudes towards parental support, and the expression and recognition of a set of overlapping roles and expectations of parents as partners by the schools indicates that rural lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region do not involve parents as a grudging obedience to the educational policies. Lower primary schools regard the parental involvement approach as one of the best means they can use to convey a sense of parental rights and responsibilities toward children's education.

I lend my support to Bourdieu's theory that parents' lack of education is equated with limited access to capital relevant for supporting the academic education of their children (Bourdieu, 1977). However, this does not always mean that less educated parents have lower educational expectations. Lack of educational attainment does not necessarily negatively influence parents' desire and interest to support their children's education. Educational expectations have various influences. A good example of this was indicated by the findings regarding admiration of educated people and parents' wishes for their children to become like those people they admire in life. These feelings encourage parents to support their children's education.

Reflecting on the findings of the study, I found that the promotion of social relationships, networks and connections between adults in the two primary micro-systems of children (home and school) and the congruence in their attitudes and behaviours are important for the practice of parental involvement. The establishment of social relationships, networks and connections between professional educators and parents is good for addressing the problem of alienation among parents.

Lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region reach out to parents who are generally thought of as 'difficult to reach'. The rural lower primary schools further understand that parents do not exist out of context but interact with their surroundings, i.e. communities. Thus, they realised that there should be interconnections and multi-directionality of parent, school, and community relationships.

Professional educators in rural lower primary schools are competent to initiate parental involvement. Communication with parents is viewed as a means through which parents are involved to support and promote the academic education and achievement of their children. Therefore, opportunities to obtain capital were organised for parents by schools. They include adult education classes, parent-teacher meetings and individual parent-teacher discussions and workshops provide parents with social, informational and material rewards. This capital represents the power of parents to promote their children's academic enrichment. In addition, rural lower primary schools have professional educators who are responsive to the needs of parents. Parents are given freedom to visit

schools at any times. Schools provide parents with the information about child-care, invite health professionals to provide health-related information to parents and learners (i.e. the use of needed resources in the community) and professional educators behave in a friendly way to parents and make them welcome to schools.

Indicators of parental involvement practices by lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region are the creation of conducive climate to parental support; provision of educational opportunities for knowledge development about parental involvement to parents; use of community resources and knowledge of community experts and learners' parents; provision of opportunities for technical support (pedagogy, curriculum and assessment) for classroom activities to parents; involvement of parents in power sharing and decision-making; and a positive attitude towards involvement. These indicators of parental involvement practised by the rural lower primary schools are regarded as evidence of the answer to the main research question - whether and how professional educators and parents of rural lower primary schools in Namibia perceive, think about and practise involvement in the academic education of learners.

Instead of considering parents as hopeless, rural lower primary schools promote practices which are implementable and workable. The practices the schools implement appear to be salient contributors to effective school-parent collaborations which are relevant to learners' academic education.

There are rural parents who recognise the importance of parental involvement and, therefore, try to use their precious free time despite other house chores, and lack of capital and resources, to support school activities. Parents demonstrate their involvement by engaging in educational discussions (school work and experiences of school) with their children, providing children with a supportive home learning environment and assisting them with homework. These practices of parents reveal their attention, devotion and interest in the education of their children. Attention, care and devotion of time are some of the important aspects of practice that have positive ramifications for academic learning. The literature reports a lack of confidence by rural parents in their interaction with professional educators and the education system and that they usually defer to teachers' expertise (Lee & Bowen, 2006). However, there are parents in rural schools who strongly believe that they can and would like to help with classroom teaching, provision of teaching and learning materials, checking lesson planning and preparations of teachers regardless of their educational level. Rural parents have confidence in contributing to the education of their children. This confidence represents the unique strengths of parents living in rural areas. Therefore, professional educators

should respect, value and consider these strengths of parents in their efforts to foster parental involvement in the academic education of learners.

The fact that parents visit schools may be interpreted as a demonstration of interest in their children's education. However, the reason that some parents do not visit schools and do not respond positively to school invitations which indicate lack of interest in their children's education should not be left without being considered as one of the barriers schools experience.

I should also admit that some parents lack confidence in their interactions with the education system and usually defer to professional educators' expertise. Moreover, it appears as if rural parents who get more involved are those whose children are not doing well in schools. However, according to Lee & Bowen (2006), this is a common practice across social groups. If rural schools were found to be struggling to practise parental involvement, it should be regarded as challenges of the process which might be experienced by all schools in any environment.

Lack of physical energy due to old age limits the ability of some parents/caretakers to support school activities. Many children in rural areas live with elderly people. Parents either work away from home to reduce poverty, or parents have died from HIV and AIDS-related diseases. It is common knowledge that HIV and AIDS is more associated with poor and less educated people. Therefore, lack of education, poverty and children living with old people were found to be the greatest challenges to the practice of parental involvement in rural lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Parental involvement in the academic education of learners is associated with learners' attendance, achievement, development and better future life. Therefore, parental involvement should continue to be an important focus of professional educators, parents and the whole community at large in all contexts.

- **Recommendation to the Ministry of Education**

Although the findings from the schools under study indicate that they manage to implement parental involvement strategies reasonably despite the reported challenges, findings about the barriers to parental involvement imply that professional educators need in-service education about

developing a diverse involvement focus and a varied menu of practices to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to create, implement and maintain attractive strategies of involvement with parents and local communities. The Ministry of Education have a responsibility to ensure that parental involvement and lifelong learning opportunities in rural schools are adequately resourced and provided. School-partnership with parents should continue to feature in schemes of professional development. This is important if old stereotypes of parental involvement in rural schools are to be demolished and negative preconceptions removed. Instead of treating the practices of parental involvement in rural schools as inferior and having rural schools accept the situation as natural, factors fuelling an approach to parental involvement among rural schools should be explored and recommended. These include encouraging schools to appreciate the importance of ecological settings and the government improving rural conditions. The government should look into the issue of lack of financial resources in rural areas. There is a need for the creation finance-generating projects and empowering rural communities with self employment creation skills. This same attempt may make young parents become available for support of their children and for many parents to develop a desire for collaborative partnerships with schools.

- **Recommendations to rural lower primary schools**

Low self-esteem of some parents and their view that teachers were experts on classroom matters and concerns about their ability to work with educational professionals seemed to influence their insufficient participation (as suggested in reported obstacles and limitations) in their children's education. Schools need to make special efforts to encourage and empower parents who are less confident about their ability to support schools and not motivated in assisting their children's academic education. Subject specific training, and psychological and pedagogical guidance should be provided through literacy programs and practices to these parents. According to Barton et al. (2004) if that effort is made, parents will respond and children will benefit academically.

I find it as a good practice of parental involvement when professional educators in rural schools do not regard parents as people to approach for advice only when learners experience learning problems or other some sort of difficulty, but are approached as trustworthy friends and partners with whom they hold discussions for amicable solutions. However, the discussions between professional educators and parents about poor performance of learners may have a narrow focus of involvement. This finding may support other researchers' findings that parents from poor economic backgrounds help their children with schoolwork only when their children are not doing well academically (Fan, 2001). Discussions about learner performance should be held even when the

children are doing well in schools. Moreover, this finding may suggest that rural schools and parents need to make an effort to make their discussions about the performance of learners with parents inclusive and applicable to both poor and good performers.

Efforts to increase parental involvement activities at school and reward initiatives for parents as far as involvement is concerned should be given serious attention based on the findings that parents expressed the desire to be more involved in school-based activities. However, such strategies will need to draw upon the capabilities for action and contribution that are within the means of the communities in which the schools are situated. Methods of involvement must take heed of the life situations of parents. Increased activities in which parents are involved at school are associated with high parental involvement (Hill & Taylor, 2004). When schools acknowledge and reward involvement efforts by parents, it makes their relationship and collaboration more productive. In addition, the findings have an implication for the establishment of programmes focusing on the development of understanding about parental involvement and nurturing the importance of parental involvement in parents. The understanding of parents improves their involvement level in school and at home. Schools would be much richer and more thriving places for education if parents are encouraged to come into them, are warmly welcomed, comfortably accommodated and challengingly involved in their work.

An inviting, warm and productive school climate such as a flexible school schedule for parent visits and professional educators' friendly and welcoming attitude towards parents, as well as the provision of literacy education lessons are some of the best combating strategies of practical barriers to parental involvement. These behaviours show that schools are sensitive to parents' time, emotions and needs.

Schools should develop forms of recruiting and training parental leaders, and appoint lead teachers for school and family connections. In addition, schools need to create and establish ways and strategies within which professional educators and parents can work effectively in partnership with each other. In these ways schools will quickly learn how best to utilise the skills and knowledge of parents and make the fullest use of the full range of resources available in the community. Parents will learn and gain knowledge and understanding of how schools operate and for purposes.

- **Recommendations to professional educators**

We all know that the need for the skills of literacy and numeracy is particularly pressing in rural areas. This study found that only a few of the schools studied help parents and community members address these needs by offering them adult literacy lessons. Professional educators should also help parents develop skills in numeracy and modern mathematics so that parents who are challenged in this way may profit.

Professional educators should create spaces in schools where parents feel at home and feel that they belong in the school. Professional educators should also develop a sense of partnership and co-operation in schools by establishing representative committees at the local level and welcome all parents (literate and illiterate, employed and unemployed) to serve on committees. Professional educators should provide parents with opportunities and encourage them, especially male parents, to engage in their own lifelong learning.

Professional educators should empower parents to engage more in lesson presentations at the classroom level and teach other academic skills than reading at home. Other findings suggest that the success of this experience indicate that all parents, even those with limited formal education, can help teach children. Moreover, teaching at home could be a context within which lifelong education can be instituted and protracted.

Professional educators in individual schools need to be encouraged to carry out individual action research projects at the classroom levels. The results of these projects, although not necessarily generalisable, can lead to the identification of both successful and unsuccessful practices in parental involvement at the local level.

- **Recommendations to rural parents**

Rural parents should be invited to participate in school functions, community-based fundraising projects and encouraged to improve their own literacy and numeracy skills through adult education programmes. Those with skills related to Namibian culture (e.g., basketry, pottery, dance and music, story-telling) should be invited to lead and participate in programmes in the schools. Parent leaders should be trained to train other parents how to interact with learners at home in order to reinforce and extend academic skills in all areas, but especially in literacy and numeracy. The importance of volunteering to serve on school committees and on the school board should be presented to parents as one way to improve the education of their children.

- **Recommendations to stake holders in collaboration**

Identifying and creating strategies for addressing and reducing barriers to involvement in rural lower primary schools should be one of the priorities the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the communities in which schools are situated should consider. At some of the schools, parents were spoken of as being ‘poor’, ‘old’ and lacking understanding and, therefore, unable to provide proper parenting and school support. References were made to alcohol abuse, ignorance and a laissez-faire attitude by parents. These findings have an implication for the establishment of programmes focusing on the development of understanding about parental involvement and nurturing the importance of parental involvement in parents. The understanding of parents improves their involvement level in school and at home.

5.6 LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The rate of returned questionnaires was not as high as one would have wished for. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised beyond rural lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region. Informal discussions with two school inspectors and a few school principals revealed that this may have been caused by unfamiliarity with the culture of research among some professionals. They mentioned that from their experience, some professionals are not willing to participate in research activities which are not initiated by the government ministries. They normally agree to complete questionnaires from the government institutions since they are government employees, but not from private individuals.

Teachers who were informally asked why they think people did not complete and return the questionnaires mentioned that the cause could be lack of time. Since it was near the end of the year, professionals in schools were busy with examinations and related activities and, therefore, did not have time to give to non-work related agendas.

This study used purposive sampling (sometimes called judgmental sampling) in which I have specified the characteristics of a population of interest: rural regions in which the Oshikwanyama dialect is spoken. Among the targeted four rural regions in northern Namibia, Ohangwena was located as the only region which has met these characteristics. Therefore, the ability to generalise the results from lower primary schools in one region (Ohangwena) to all lower primary schools in all the northern rural regions is severely limited. However, the strongest quality of this design was a

possible zero sampling error within the studied region. The study sampled the complete population of the whole Ohangwena Region.

Another limitation of this study was its reliance on a questionnaire results alone to identify schools with high, intermediate and low parental involvement which were studied at Phase 2 of this study. Response choices on the questionnaire may be biased to the extent that principals and teachers may rate their schools higher or lower than what they really are. However, this limitation was attenuated, to some extent, by the fact that the investigation of the school practices of parental involvement included parent interviews at Phase 2 of the study to capture more information as much as possible. Extreme case sampling was utilised to identify high, intermediate and low parental involvement schools for a comparative examination. Although the examination of the six extreme schools provided rich descriptions of what and how parental involvement activities are implemented in rural lower primary schools, the qualitative analysis produced limited information on what circumstances lead to the differences in schools' practices. Therefore, further improvement in construction of interview questions and the questions during the process of interviews to be more probing, is certainly necessary. In addition, approaches that add direct observations of involvement would greatly add depth to the study of parental involvement.

Strengths of this study lie in the use of the following strategies:

- Low inference descriptors – Descriptions phrased very close to the participants' accounts were used so that the readers can experience the participants' actual language and personal meanings. Therefore, the participants' exact words are provided in direct quotations.
- Multiple perspectives – The study explained how different theories explain parental involvement to provide more insight on the practice of parental involvement.
- Peer review – Discussions of my interpretations with a colleague who is familiar with the research provided useful challenges and better insights.
- Reflexivity – I did a critical self-reflection on my potential biases as an attempt to avoid any predispositions which might have interfered with the study's process.
- Method and data triangulation – The use of more than one method (quantitative and qualitative) and multiple data sources (principals, teachers, parents and, of course, the literature) to study rural lower primary schools' practices of parental involvement in academic education of learners were employed. The methodology of this study (mixed method) adds to the strength of this study. In a two-phase sequential design, the Phase 1

(quantitative) results were used to inform the design of the Phase 2 (qualitative) component. This design produces better complete knowledge necessary to add to the existing theory (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The current study's data collection process excluded learners' views. This, I acknowledge, might be a limitation of the study but might also indicate the strength of the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 279) warn researchers on unreliable data collected from young children. They believe that "*children tend to say anything rather than nothing at all, thereby limiting the possibility of data*" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 279). The study's critical analysis of parental involvement implementation in rural schools resulted in a new trend in the perception of whether and how rural lower primary schools practice this approach to education. The current trend is towards rural lower primary schools' ability and interest to practice parental involvement. Where there is an interest, there is always a way and initiatives.

5.7 FUTURE RESEACH

This study focuses on how rural lower primary schools involve parents in academic education of learners. Further studies which focus on how interactive networks, collaborations and links between and among stakeholders serve as resources for effective operations by schools will add more knowledge to the existing knowledge base. Networks of different stakeholders have the potential of fostering a sense of responsibility, trust and involvement in all partners.

There is a need for research which provides information about which strategies are likely to improve parents' commitment to and participation in parental involvement. Further studies are needed which identify those strategies which produce positive changes in the academic performance of learners at all levels of the educational system.

Studies are needed to assess the changes or improvements noted in the involvement of parents who attended literacy education classes, meetings about subject specific information sharing and meetings in which parents are shown how to assist their children with reading at home. This type of study will measure the effect of those parental involvement strategies on literacy skills of lower primary learners.

Strengthening and improving the types of parental involvement at school and at home requires further investigation. Samples from more than one rural region would also be a valuable addition to the research on the practice of parental involvement in schools. Comparative studies need to be carried out to identify strategies that lead to success regardless of the region or socio-economic situation of the adults in the region.

From the parents' point of view, many are interested in the entire gamut of possible involvement but professional educators are not sufficiently involving them. There is a surprising, encouraging and strongly expressed interest from parents to be involved in all facets of their children's education. Therefore, action research is needed to critically inquire more into and support for rural lower primary schools to capitalise on the interest of parents in how they (parents) would like to become more involved. The outcome of this inquiry might produce better and more viable structured strategies for effective parental involvement in education of learners. Schools should become reflective and find out what the whole community wants, and then develop and articulate strategies that will encourage parents and community members to become more fully involved in school lives. Schools are a community resource. Therefore, part of their responsibility is to be accountable to the community.

The degree to which parental involvement is emphasised in teacher preparation programs needs to be assessed. The commitment and expertise of teacher educators to present teacher education majors with current information and research on this critical issue in Namibian education needs to be researched and possible changes and/or additions to the curricula of teacher education need to be engendered.

The role of technology in elevating the level of parental involvement in schools, especially in regions where poverty is the norm, needs to be investigated and programs developed which help parents in areas where they feel powerless in helping their children academically.

5.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

All the schools studied were located in the same educational region (Ohangwena) and were using one and the same language (Oshiwambo) as the medium of instruction at the lower primary phase. Generally, the schools were situated in poor communities where there was a lack of education and employment among community members.

At the outset of this study, I wanted to find out how lower primary schools involve parents in the academic education of learners. At the heart of this study was a desire to generate descriptions of the practice of parental involvement in the academic education of learners by rural, lower primary schools in the Ohangwena Region of Northern Namibia. Perceptions of and attitude towards parental involvement frame what and how professional educators practise it. Therefore, this study tried to inquire into professional educators' perceptions and attitudes towards involving parents as well as their practice of parental involvement. I assumed that there were some barriers that permeated attempts of rural lower primary schools to practise parental involvement. Thus, barriers were also investigated. I also examined how schools tried to address the barriers to parental involvement that were experienced. Since ecologies of the parental involvement framework place parents within a network of actors, the study tried to look into how parents use their knowledge and abilities to promote relationships with schools, other parents and community members, and to position themselves as authorities of their children's learning. Informed by their experiences about the impact of involvement on their children's education and their experiences that their participation makes a difference in their children's learning, parents reported that their children's performance and school attendance improved as a result of increased interaction between them and schools.

The educational relationships exhibited in rural schools is complex and linked to the improvement of lives and aspirations of the beneficiaries, in this case, schools, parents and learners. Professional educators and parents in rural lower primary schools in Ohangwena Region try to work together to maximise educational endeavours and parents' lifelong learning in schools. The complexity of corroborations and interrelationships between schools and parents indicate the insight that parental involvement in education of learners as practiced in rural schools is not merely about parents being members of school boards or contributing to the school development fund as per preconceptions. But, when I reflect on all that rural lower primary schools reported doing, it appears that despite the barriers and difficulties they experience, I am convinced and wish to advocate for rural lower primary schools' ability to implement worthy parental involvement activities and strategies. The reported practices by the studied schools are more than enough to convince other rural schools that despite challenges such as difficult rural conditions, they are still able to implement parental involvement strategies that they regard relevant and compatible with their circumstances.

We must be realistic about factors that tend to inhibit the maximum implementation of the co-operation between rural schools and parents. Firstly, the government under colonial rule deprived and denied the then South West African people the right and legal responsibility to participate and contribute to education of their children. This was reflected in the provision of the Segregatory

Education. Many black Namibians have never been to school. Most of adults were not enlightened about education and its importance. This situation resulted in poorly skilled and illiterate human resources, especially in rural areas. Therefore, patience to schools' gradual moving from this colonial legacy in which the struggle to implement parental involvement is included is needed.

Recognition of educational benefits of parental involvement in children's education should start by recognising and heartening rural schools' current efforts. Secondly, it is a reality that in any context (rural, urban or semi-urban) not everyone wants to be involved in the life of the school. Moreover, there are rural parents who want the best of their children and therefore want to be involved. However, they cannot be available for every form of service and cannot contribute constantly to the schools' undertakings all the time. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest a caveat that people must accept the reality that most of the members of rural school population are unemployed and live below the poverty line, or disadvantaged in other ways. As a result, some parents may not have full confidence or sufficient time to become involved in the activities of the schools, especially when they are in the poverty ambush. But this does not mean that they are not interested. What rural schools need to do is to challenge the preconceptions which are trying to look down on their parental involvement initiatives and promote the belief that only urban and educated parents have confidence to engage in interactions with schools. It is here that issues of social justice arise. If parental involvement in rural schools is encouraged, then social class in terms of the level of ability to support school activities disappears.

The current perceptions, actions and behaviours of the rural lower primary schools studied as far as parental involvement is concerned, is encouraging. The studied schools perceive parental involvement as a joint endeavour between home and school. They understand involving parents in education of learners as a co-construction of a productive relationship by schools and parents. The purpose is to convey and instil in parents a sense of parental rights and responsibilities for children's education. Activities performed by the studied schools reflect that they operate from within a culture of democracy. Studied schools demonstrate the recognition of parents right to be involved in the education of their children. Schools create an open, warm, inviting, respectful and productive climate for parental involvement practice. Schools' practice of parental involvement instils pride and a sense of being part of the school in parents. Consequently, these feelings encourage parents to have a hand in broad-based participation and take a meaningful role that in its own way influences and shapes teaching and learning.

Therefore, I find it appropriate to say that the conventional trend is reversed in this study. The current trend exposed by this study demonstrates the potential of rural lower primary schools in implementing positive parental involvement. Strengthening and improving initiatives of the rural lower primary schools and parents to network with each other and other potential stakeholders for the improvement of learners' academic education seems to be the way forward.

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Appendix A: Consent form for professional educators and parents

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA - FACULTY OF EDUCATION

A Critical Analysis of Parental Involvement in the Education of Learners in Rural Namibia

October 2006

Dear Participants

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at studying and understanding how rural lower primary schools in Namibia promote parental involvement in learners' academic education. The purpose of the questionnaire accompanied by this letter is to help me learn and understand from your point of view about parental involvement and also about activities, support and co-operation between your school and the parents or guardians of your lower primary learners.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and confidential. You will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be established, unless you are willing to be contacted for individual follow up interviews. Should you declare yourself willing to participate in an individual interview, confidentiality will be guaranteed and you may decide to withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with an interview. All of the data will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. None of the written reports of this research will use your name or your school's name.

The results from this study will be used to

- Guide Namibian teachers and parents in the process of educating children to conceptualise the parental involvement issues;
- Provide evidence about which specific parental involvement activities and approaches are compatible with Namibia's rural schools;
- Enrich perspectives of policymakers, teachers, educators and community members at regional and national levels where concerns for promoting parental involvement are examined.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e. that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Participation in this phase of the project does not obligate you to participate in follow up individual interviews, however, should you decide to participate in follow-up interviews your participation is still voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

If you have any questions or any other confidential contributions to make about the research, you can contact me at the following address and/or telephone numbers:

Miriam Hamunyela
P.O Box 24913
Windhoek
Tel. 061-2063811
Cellphone: 0812468689

If you would like to receive a copy of the results of the research study, please list a postal address where I can send the results:

.....
.....
.....

Participant's signature: Date

Researcher's signature: Date

Yours Sincerely

Miriam Hamunyela



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF BASIC EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE:
OHANGWENA REGION

Private Bag 2028, Ondangwa, Tel. 264 65 240024, Fax. 264 65 240190

Enq: Josia S Udjombala
E-mail: judjombala@mbesc-oe.schoolnet.na
Ref. 11/P

Ms Miriam Hamunyela
P O Box 1020
Oshakati

January 10, 2005

Dear Ms Hamunyela

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN OUR SCHOOLS

1. Your letter to my office, dated December 27, 2004 requesting for permission to conduct a study in schools of the Ohangwena Education Directorate, has reference.
2. Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct such research in schools of the Ohangwena Education Region on condition that normal school programmes will not be disrupted, and that teachers, and possibly learners, too, be involved only after school hours. Before visiting schools, the Inspector of Education under whose circuit the schools fall should be conducted/informed.
3. As requested, attached to this letter you will find a list of schools in the region. The list is quite comprehensive, but by looking at schools which offer a curriculum starting from grade 1, you will be able to easily identify those that are offering the lower primary phase, which is focus the focus of your study.
4. As far as Inspectors of Education are concerned, the following information please:

* Endola Circuit	Mrs M N Immanuel-Shikalakuti,	065 – 268810
* Ohangwena Circuit	Mr T K Johannes.	065 – 260003
* Ondobe Circuit	Mr L Nakamwe,	065 – 262560/262525
* Eenhana Circuit	Mr M N Nhinda,	065 – 263026
* Ohakafiya Circuit	Mr W Ndakondja,	081 2915803



* Okongo Circuit

Mrs P Haidula,

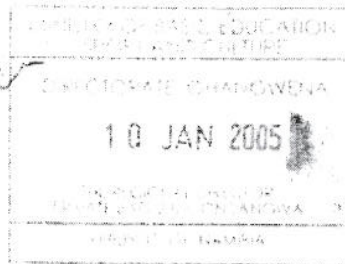
065 – 288453

5. Kindly be informed that you will be required to deposit one copy of your thesis with our regional library, in Ondangwa.
6. We would like to wish you every success with your doctoral studies, and look forward to the findings and recommendations of your research.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

J. S. Udjombala
JOSIA S UDJOMBALA
DIRECTOR: MBESC
OHANGWENA REGION



Appendix C: School principal and teacher survey on practice of parental involvement in learners' academic education

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA – FACULTY OF EDUCATION

The purpose of this survey is to gather school principals' and teachers' perceptions about parental involvement in the academic education of lower primary (grade 1-3) learners.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

For Office Use

Name of the school

No.

Instructions:

Please answer all the questions in this section by indicating with an appropriate number and/or writing in the space provided.

1. School Principal/ Teacher

1.1 Please indicate the position you are currently occupying at your school.

School Principal	1	Teacher	2
------------------	----------	---------	----------

v1

1.2 If you are a teacher, what grade do you teach?

Grade 1	1	Grade 2	2	Grade 3	3
---------	----------	---------	----------	---------	----------

v2

v3

v4

1.3 Please indicate your gender

Female	1	Male	2
--------	----------	------	----------

v5

1.4 Indicate your birth date

y	y	y	y	m	m	d	d

v6

1.5 What is your mother tongue?

Oshiwambo	1
Lozi	2
Otjiherero	3
Other (please specify)	

v7

1.6 How many years have you been in the teaching profession?

v8

1.7 Indicate your highest professional qualification?

2-teacher training certificate	1
3-year teacher training certificate	2
3-or 4-year Bachelor's degree or honours' degree	3
5-year (or more) Postgraduate degree	4

v9

2. The school

2.1 How many learners are at your school?.....

v10

2.2 How many learners are in grade 1-3?.....

v11



For Office Use

2.3 How many teachers are at this school?.....

v12

2.4 How many teachers are teaching grade 1-3?.....

v13

--

2.5 How old is this school?.....

v14

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2.6 Which of the following facilities are available at your school?
(please circle all the numbers which apply)

Toilets/ Latrines	1
Electricity	2
Piped water	3
A telephone	4

v15

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v16

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v17

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v18

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2.7 How would you describe the community (in terms of the inhabitants' living conditions) in which your school is situated?

v19

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Very poor	1
Poor	2
Acceptable standard of living	3
Good living	4

2.8 Does your school have a Teacher-Parent Organisation?

Yes	2	No	1
-----	---	----	---

v20

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2.9 If your answer to question 2.8 is **Yes**, please name four (4) functions of this organization.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

v21

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v22

--

v23

--

v24

--

2.10 Name four (4) functions of your SCHOOL BOARD regarding learners' academic education.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

v25

--

v26

--

v27

--

v28

--

2.11 Name 3 aspects that YOU would like to focus on regarding the involvement of parents in the Grade 1 to 3 learners' academic education.

- 1
- 2
- 3

v29

--

v30

--

v31

--

2.12 Name 3 aspects that you would like PARENTS to focus on regarding the Grade 1 to 3 learners' academic education.

- 1
- 2
- 3

v32

--

v33

--

v34

--

SECTION B: SCHOOLS' PRACTICE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Instructions:

Please answer all questions in this section by indicating your **current opinion** about each statement. **Circle the code number** (only one number) that best describes your sentiment per statement.

3. To what extent do the following statements describe your school's climate?

For Office Use

	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
3.1	Our school is clean and well maintained.	1	2	3	4
3.2	Our school environment is safe for learners.	1	2	3	4
3.3	Our school provides snacks and drinks during parents/teachers' meetings.	1	2	3	4
3.4	Parents who are actively involved in our school activities are shown appreciation for what they have done.	1	2	3	4
3.5	Parents are free to visit the school at any time of the school day to meet with the principal and teachers.	1	2	3	4

v35

v36

v37

v38

v39

4. To what extent do these statements represent what your school does regarding the participation of parents in educational opportunities?

	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
4.1	4.1 Our school organises meetings in which teachers discuss the importance of involvement with parents.	1	2	3	4
4.2	4.2 Our school experiences at least 50% parent attendance at parent teacher meetings.	1	2	3	4
4.3	4.3 The contents and philosophy of the curriculum of specific subjects are discussed at the parents' meetings.	1	2	3	4
4.4	4.4 Our school organises workshops in which parents are made to understand their roles, rights and responsibilities in terms of their children's academic education.	1	2	3	4
4.5	4.5 Our school offers parents literacy lessons in which parents are guided on what they should do when assisting their children in reading, writing and computation at home.	1	2	3	4
4.6	4.6 Our school organises counseling opportunities for parents of children with specific learning needs.	1	2	3	4
4.7	Our school organises counseling opportunities for parents of children with behaviour problems.	1	2	3	4

v40

v41

v42

v43

v44

v45

v46



5. To what extent does your school make use of community resources (social capital in the community)?

For Office Use

	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
5.1	Our school uses elderly community members to educate parents on child care.	1	2	3	4
5.2	Our school utilises professional health workers to develop parents' understanding about the importance of providing children with healthy food, appropriate clothes and protection from diseases.	1	2	3	4
5.3	Our school asks community members to interpret for parents when the language of the meeting is not understood by parents.	1	2	3	4
5.4	The school identifies community members to be specially invited for fund raising events for the school.	1	2	3	4

v47

v48

v49

v50

6. How often do the following statements indicate what happens at your school?

	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
6.1	Teachers make parental involvement part of their regular teaching practice.	1	2	3	4
6.2	Teachers ask parents to do lesson demonstrations on subjects in which they have knowledge.	1	2	3	4
6.3	Parents donate equipment and materials teachers can use for teaching.	1	2	3	4
6.4	Our school asks parents to support and monitor learners' homework activities.	1	2	3	4
6.5	Teachers invite parents to observe teaching in progress.	1	2	3	4
6.6	Our school includes parent volunteers in preparation of fundraising activities.	1	2	3	4

v51

v52

v53

v54

v55

v56



7. To what extent does your school make use of the following communication options?

For Office Use

	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
7.1	Our school organises meetings to provide information on school policies, regulations, mission statements and goals.	1	2	3	4
7.2	Individual parent-teacher meetings provide the school with valuable information about learners' conditions and backgrounds.	1	2	3	4
7.3	We write informative and encouraging letters to parents whose children are performing poorly.	1	2	3	4
7.4	Our school sends letters to parents which serve as effective means of getting many of them to attend meetings.	1	2	3	4
7.5	The telephone is one of the means our school uses to communicate to parents.	1	2	3	4
7.6	Parents are invited to parents' days with the aim of reviewing and discussing learners' academic work.	1	2	3	4
7.7	Our school uses home visits as opportunities for parents to discuss their concerns about their children on a one- to-one basis with teachers.	1	2	3	4
7.8	Home school diaries are used to communicate regular school programmes the school uses.	1	2	3	4

v57

v58

v59

v60

v61

v62

v63

v64

8. To what extent does your school involve parents in the following?

	Statement	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
8.1	Our school board is comprised of parents and teachers.	1	2	3	4
8.2	Besides parent representatives on a school board committee, they are also represented on a school improvement committee.	1	2	3	4
8.3	Representatives of parents are members of the learners' code of conduct development committee.	1	2	3	4
8.4	Our school includes parents in the home work policy development committee.	1	2	3	4
8.5	We distribute our school policy to parents in parents' meetings and ask for their critical comments.	1	2	3	4

v65

v66

v67

v68

v69

SECTION C: SCHOOLS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Instructions:

Please answer all questions in this section by indicating your **current opinion** about each statement. **Circle the code number** (only one number) that best describes your sentiment per statement.

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

For Office Use

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
9.1	An important way to improve the quality of education in schools is to involve parents in school activities.	1	2	3	4	v70
9.2	No matter how qualified teachers are, they need parents' support.	1	2	3	4	v71
9.3	Parents have a right to contribute to the decisions that affect their children's education.	1	2	3	4	v72
9.4	The distribution of school policies and rules enables parents to learn their rights and responsibilities in supporting their children's education.	1	2	3	4	v73
9.5	Involvement of parents in learners' learning activities reduces the feeling of alienation between schools and parents.	1	2	3	4	v74
9.6	Schools should allow parents to carefully examine and constructively question the practices of schools.	1	2	3	4	v75
9.7	Schools should allow parents to monitor teachers' attendance.	1	2	3	4	v76
9.8	Parents' feedback helps teachers learn their strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	v77
9.9	Parents' support and monitoring of homework activities cultivate and promote the daily habit of completing homework.	1	2	3	4	v78
9.10	Home visits give teachers a chance to develop an awareness and understanding of learners' backgrounds and life styles.	1	2	3	4	v79

10. To what extent do the following statements describe your thoughts?

For Office Use

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.1	Parents in rural areas are too poor to provide for and strengthen their children's education.	1	2	3	4
10.2	Teachers at this school are skilled enough to take care of all learners' needs, therefore, they do not need parental support at all.	1	2	3	4
10.3	Parents do not assist their children with homework activities.	1	2	3	4
10.4	Parents in rural areas have unique skills and knowledge to assist in their children's academic learning.	1	2	3	4
10.5	Rural contexts do not interfere with the practice of parental involvement.	1	2	3	4

v80

v81

v82

v83

v84

SECTION D: BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

11. To what extent do the following statements describe your school's experience?

	Statement	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often
11.1	Parents avoid contacting the school because they fear being put into positions of authority and responsibility.	1	2	3	4
11.2	Most parents in this community are unable to read and/or write.	1	2	3	4
11.3	Parents feel that formal education is the school's responsibility alone.	1	2	3	4
11.4	Teachers do not involve parents because they had never been taught the benefits of parent involvement.	1	2	3	4
11.5	Teachers do not involve parents because they are not sure of what to involve parents in.	1	2	3	4
11.6	Parents are grappling with problems of survival and have little time and energy for school involvement.	1	2	3	4
11.7	Lack of confidence among parents prevents them from becoming involved in school's academic work.	1	2	3	4
11.8	Teachers do not understand the value of family support.	1	2	3	4
11.9	Teachers try to avoid parents' scrutiny.	1	2	3	4

v85

v86

v87

v88

v89

v90

v91

v92

v93

Thank you very much for your time and contribution

Appendix D: Statistics of schools in Ohangwena Region

OHANGWENA EDUCATION REGIONS

INFORMATION REGARDING SCHOOLS IN THE REGION AS ON 15.02.05

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Eenhana	Eembaxu	8183	Eembaxu CS	Gr. 1-10		Mwiiyaa R.	572	18	31.78
		8496	Malangu PS	Gr. 1-7		Nakale L.	289	8	36.13
		8252	Oshandi CS	Gr.1-8		Kashiimbi A.P.	328	10	32.80
		8652	Efidi PS	Gr.1-7		Hakandume S	258	7	36.86
		New	Ehoma JPS	Gr.1-2		Paulus T.	74	2	37.00
		8552	Shaama JPS	Gr. 1-4		Shaululu T.	119	5	23.80
		8224	Ehenene PS	Gr.1-7		Lukas H.N.	250	8	31.25
	8347	Omakondo	Gr.1-8		Mwatale N.	274	8	34.25	
	Eenhana	8764	Eenhana PS	Gr. 1-7	065-263090	Hanghuwo M.N.	613	17	36.06
		8185	Eenhana JSS	Gr.8-10		Geingob B.C.	527	17	31.00
		8211	Oheti CS	Gr.1-10		Nakale T.	466	13	35.85
		8327	Egambo PS	Gr.1-7		Dumeni M.	296	10	29.60
		8228	Omutwewondjaba PS	Gr.1-7		Shingo D.	330	10	33.00
	8026	Otaukondjele PS	Gr.1-6		Nakale R.	107	5	21.40	
	Haimbili Haufiku	8602	Haimbilli Haufiku Ss	Gr. 8-12	065-263027	Sheya D.J.	669	21	31.86
		8193	Epinga JPS	Gr.1-4		Ndaitwa J.	85	3	28.33
		8210	Ohehonge PS	Gr.1-7		Shawapala V.	456	15	30.40
		8516	Okavela PS	Gr.1-7		Nangobe S.	315	8	39.38
		8220	Omhanda CS	Gr.1-10		Naingwedja R.N.	374	12	31.17
		7902	Twaalulilwa PS	Gr.1-5		Kawiiwa S.	199	6	33.17
	Onambutu	8353	Onambutu CS	Gr.1-10		Mbango E.	732	22	33.27
		8326	Eenyama Cs	Gr.1-8		Embundile L.	197	8	24.63
		8030	Kambala JPS	Gr.1-4		Shidiwe E.	78	3	26.00
		8389	Onakatumbe PS	Gr.1-7		Mundilo E	233	7	33.29
		8348	Omatha CS	Gr. 1-10		Elia H.	513	16	32.06
		8557	Onaisaati JPS	Gr. 1-4		Nekongo M.	96	4	24.00
	Onanona	8357	Onanona CS	Gr. 1-10	065-264569	Uuyumba R.	799	23	34.74
		8712	Kaauluma CS	Gr. 1-10		Mutilifa L.S.	563	21	26.81
		8665	Okambumbu PS	Gr. 1-7		Bekela T.P.	234	8	29.25
		8600	Onamambo PS	Gr. 1-7	065-264500	Shipahu T.T.	173	8	21.63
8355		Onankali-North CS	Gr. 1-10	065-241480	Shipena F.	640	20	32.00	
8369		Oshaango CS	Gr. 1-10	065-24141	Shikongo V.A.	809	22	36.77	
8740		Shatiwa PS	Gr. 1-7		Ashipala V.	193	7	27.57	

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Eenhana	Onanona	8688	Ombinga JPS	Gr. 1-4		Kambonde F.	97	4	24.25
		8364	Oniigwena PS	Gr. 1-7		Katti E.	292	8	36.50
		8230	Onakalunga CS	Gr. 1-10		Kaukungwa V.	528	16	33.00
	Onakalunga	8622	Shimbode PS	Gr. 1-7		Ikanda F.	215	7	30.71
		8189	Elundu PS	Gr. 1-7		Hanghuwo S.	238	7	34.00
		8432	Ohainengena JPS	Gr. 1-4		Shilongo S.N.	61	2	30.50
			Hanghome PS	Gr. 1-2					
			Onakaale PS	Gr.1-2					
TOTALS							12720	398	31.95

TYPE OF SCHOOLS IN EENHANA CIRCUIT

Junior Primary	9
Primary	17
Combined	13
Jun. Secondary	1
Secondary	1
	41

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Endola	Eengedjo	8119	Eengedjo SS	Gr.8-10		Nafine A,	656	24	27.33
		8137	Omungwelume JSS	Gr.1-7		Simasiku A.	491	15	32.73
		8136	Omungwelume PS	Gr.1-7		Hasheela M.	564	18	31.33
		8125	Eudafano PS	Gr.1-7		Hakaala P.	445	14	31.86
		8151	Pahangwashime PS	Gr.1-7		Kanana S.N.	309	10	30.90
	Omundudu	8166	Omundudu CS	Gr.1-10		Namhindo A.	548	22	24.91
		8696	Engungumano PS	Gr.1-6		Nghimwenavali M.	197	6	32.83
		8169	Onambwebwe CS	Gr.1-7		Ashipala J.	684	19	36.00
		8158	Epundi PS	Gr.1-10		Shihepo R.	389	13	29.92
		8177	Oshimwaku CS	Gr.1-10		Shihepo W.	605	20	30.25
	Shituwa	8179	Shituwa JSS	Gr.8-10		Ndumba Ndumba G.	402	17	23.65
		8426	Peumba PS	Gr.1-7		Shangheta A.M.	432	12	36.00
		8159	Endola PS	Gr.1-7		Kafula I.N.	527	15	35.13
		8156	Ehafo CS	Gr.1-10		Ndaumbwa R.	846	25	33.84
		8161	Evatelo CS	Gr.1-10		Hasheela V.	683	20	34.15
		8172	Onepandaulo CS	Gr.1-10		Shifidi F.I.	716	24	29.83
	Onanghulo	8155	Tulihongeni CS	Gr.1-10		Shilongo J.	285	10	28.50
		8171	Onanghulo CS	Gr.1-10		Hamunyela J.	675	21	32.14
		8422	Onangubu PS	Gr.1-7		Shangheta K.	277	8	34.63
		8707	Ongonga PS	Gr.1-6		Kamati V.K.	267	7	38.14
		8176	Shawapala CS	Gr.1-10		Nghipandwa P.	701	21	33.38
	Ongenga	8497	Shikeva PS	Gr.1-7		Nekundi E.	276	9	30.67
		8143	Ongenga JSS	Gr.8-10		Haulenga S.T.	448	16	28.00
		8142	Ongenga PS	Gr.1-7		Hauuanga F.K.	715	23	31.09
		8118	Eemboo CS	Gr.1-8		Nambindo F.	364	10	36.40
		8121	Elakalapwa CS	Gr.1-10		Hamutenya D.M.	761	23	33.09
		8618	Onhenga PS	Gr.1-6		Nghifilenya E.M.	170	6	28.33
		8698	Nasheya PS	Gr.1-5		Hangula M.	316	9	35.11
	Okambebe	8133	Okambebe CS	Gr.1-10		Hasheela, T.	849	27	31.44
		8148	Oshali-West CS	Gr.1-10		Johannes J.	736	27	27.26
		8699	Oushakeneno PS	Gr.1-6		Shiyuka M.	229	7	32.71
8134		Okamukwa CS	Gr.1-8		Nelulu J.	428	12	35.67	
8611		Ongudi PS	Gr.1-7			289	12	24.08	
						TOTALS	16281	522	31.19

TYPE OF SCHOOLS IN ENDOLA CIRCUIT

Junior Primary	0	Combined	14	Secondary	1
Primary	15	Junior Secondary	3	Total	33

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Ohangwena	Engela	8190	Engela JSS	Gr.8-10	065-260190	Kafidi N.	429	16	26.81
		8247	Onghala PS	Gr.1-7		Kafidi L.	462	14	33.00
		7291	Ndilokelwa JPS	Gr.1-2		Shatilwe T.N.	74	2	37.00
		8266	Weyulu PS	Gr.1-7		Nghiyoonanye L.	718	22	32.64
		8250	Onyofi PS	Gr.1-7		Hamana R.	431	14	30.79
		8550	Ndjuma JPS	Gr.1-4		Kakololo W.H.	140	4	35.00
		8232	Onamukalo CS	Gr.1-10	065-260191	Ndatonwiyo L.	915	25	36.60
		8260	Oshitambi PS	Gr.1-7		Hala S.N.	405	11	36.82
	Omuve	8229	Omuve JSS	Gr.8-10		Mhanda J.T.	249	10	24.90
		8263	Shikudule PS	Gr.1-7	065-245555	Nghitwikwa M.	689	20	34.45
		8187	Ehambelelo PS	Gr.1-10		Hamatwi L.	713	19	37.53
		8632	Omahenge PS	Gr.1-6		Nhinda R.K.	268	8	33.50
		7292	Nailenge JPS	Gr.1-3		Shalyefu T.T.	112	3	37.33
		8207	Ohalushu PS	Gr.1-7		Kamonde P.	500	15	33.33
		8239	Ondjadjaxwi CS	Gr.1-10		Kavela E.A.	691	21	32.90
	Ongha	8246	Ongha SS	Gr.8-12	065-245400	Mutumbo S.	473	18	26.28
		8201	Nanghonda CS	Gr.1-10		Liwakala P.	962	26	37.00
		8430	Kapombo PS	Gr.1-7		Nangolo P.	415	12	34.58
		8237	Ondeihaluka CS	Gr.1-10	065-245450	Namhindo E.	845	28	30.18
		8438	Ondeikela CS	Gr.1-10	065-245565	Kamanda J.	497	14	35.50
		8737	Okatale PS	Gr.1-7		Haininga D.	265	8	33.13
	Oshikango	8256	Oshikango CS	Gr.1-10		Mpinge M.	879	26	33.81
		8678	Odibo CS	Gr.1-10		Shilomboleni O.	804	24	33.50
		8202	St. Mary's Odibo HS	Gr.8-12	065-267706	Mwaanga V.	244	7	34.86
		8653	Elao PS	Gr.1-7		Shikololo T.	377	10	37.70
		8549	Nghiteke PS	Gr.1-5		Wapulile H.N.	215	6	35.83
		8245	Onengali PS	Gr.1-7		Kamati L.	550	16	34.38
	Ponhofi	8262	Ponhofi SS	Gr.8-12	065-260009	Buys C.	891	30	29.70
		8227	Omutaku PS	Gr.1-7		Pohamba O.	493	14	35.21
		8405	Ndapooa Yashikende PS	Gr.1-7		Mikka M.	681	20	34.05
		8244	Onekula JSS	Gr.8-10	065-260139	Katunohange J.	365	13	28.08
		8431	Nakambuda PS	Gr.1-7		Hishidimbwa M.	534	14	38.14
		8434	Okadila PS	Gr.1-7		Namwenyo N.	395	11	35.91

		8195	Etale CS	Gr.1-10	065-262077	Shatuka M.	952	27	35.26
		8208	Ohangwena PS	Gr.1-7		Naukushu P.	444	13	34.15

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Ohangwena	Udjombala	8265	Udjombala JSS	Gr8-10	065-260092	Meroro E.	427	15	28.47
		8126	Haikonda PS	Gr.1-7		Hangula L.	266	8	33.25
		8264	Shingunguma PS	Gr.1-7		Halweendo N.	274	9	30.44
		8205	Ohaingu PS	Gr.1-7		Nghitwiikwa O.	485	15	32.33
		8180	St. Bartholomeus CS	Gr.1-8		Amugongo A.	302	9	33.45
		8160	Etameko CS	Gr.1-8		Amugongo A.	413	12	34.42
		8213	Oipya PS	Gr.1-6		Ndjaula A.	413	6	28.33
TOTALS							20414	615	33.19

TYPE OF SCHOOLS IN OHANGWENA CIRCUIT

Junior Primary	3
Primary	21
Combined	11
Jun. Secondary	4
Secondary	3
	42

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Okahafiya	Ohakafiya	8206	Ohakafiya Cs	Gr.1-8		Shikongo P.	295	10	29.50
		8236	Onangolo CS	Gr.1-10		Nakwafila P.T.	354	11	32.18
		8645	Limbadungila PS	Gr.1-7		Hangala J.	266	7	38.00
		8255	Oshidute CS	Gr.1-10		Vatileni N.	367	13	28.23
		8150	Okadidiya PS	Gr.1-7		Shikongo E.	160	7	22.86
		8363	Onduulinawa PS	Gr.1-7		Angula p.	249	7	35.57
		8551	Onduludiya	Gr.1-4		Shetunyenga S.	123	4	30.75
		8221	Ohenghono JPS	Gr.1-4		Shingo I.	78	3	26.00
		8655	Onhova PS	Gr.1-6		Hamalwa M.	173	6	28.83
	8692	Ondobemufiya JPS	Gr.1-4		Haukongo J.	79	3	26.33	
	8333	Epembe CS	Gr.1-10	065-288816	Nahole E.J.	505	17	29.71	
	8325	Amwiimbi PS	Gr.1-7		Ndjalo T.	263	7	37.57	
	8690	Omishe PS	Gr.1-7		Muulyao N.	209	7	29.86	
	8234	Okanaimbula JPS	Gr.1-4		Akumbi J.	68	4	17.00	
	8694	Uuhahe PS	Gr.1-7		Matheus L.	195	8	24.38	
	8337	likelo PS	Gr.1-7		Ntinda S.	239	7	34.14	
	8634	Omulunga PS	Gr.1-5		Kulula R.N.	124	5	24.80	
	8392	Oshamono CS	Gr.1-10		Amunime H.	601	20	30.05	
	8335	Etsapa CS	Gr.1-9		Nakwafila W.L.	454	14	32.43	
	7972	Ewanifo PS	Gr.1-7		Gabes H.	270	7	38.57	
	8555	Omahahi PS	Gr.1-5		Kuumbwa F.C.	134	5	26.80	
	8435	Okahenge CS	Gr.1-10		Ndadi M.S.	477	15	31.80	
	8656	Ounyenye PS	Gr.1-7		Nande N.	251	7	35.86	
	8258	Oshipala PS	Gr.1-7		Nghipewa T.	185	7	26.43	
	8209	Ohauwanga PS	Gr.1-7		Hashikutuva S.N.	195	7	27.86	
	8223	Omundaungilo PS	Gr.1-5		Nghililewanga E.	120	3	40.00	
	8257	Oshikunde CS	Gr.1-10	065-289413	Shikonda H.	388	14	27.71	
	8248	Onghwiyu PS	Gr.1-7		Nakale H.N.	219	7	31.29	
	8731	Etakaya JJPS	Gr.1-4		Ngenokesho J.	77	3	25.67	
	8719	Haihambo PS	Gr.1-7		Ndamanomhata R.	258	8	32.25	
	8663	Epumbalondjaba PS	Gr.1-7		Musheti C.P.	224	6	37.33	
	7290	Ondjabayonghalu JPS	Gr.1-2		Mutota S.	63	2	31.50	
8082	Onambaladi PS	Gr.1-7	065-263026	Hainana J.H.	204	7	29.14		
8194	Eputuko CS	Gr.1-10		Shoopala S.	444	13	34.15		
8029	Onaimbundu PS	Gr.1-7		Nangombe H.N.	253	7	36.14		
8186	Efuta PS	Gr.1-7		Hangula S.	139	6	23.17		

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Okahafiya	Eputuko	7985	Omukukutu JPS	Gr.1-4		Hamupunda H.	94	3	31.33
		7293	Ndadi JPS	Gr.1-3		Hainghumbi L.	115	3	38.33
			Hafyenanye PS	Gr.1-4					
			Nalitungue PS	Gr.1-3					
Totals							8912	290	30.73

TYPE OF SCHOOLS IN OHAKAFIYA CIRCUIT

Junior Primary	10
Primary	21
Combined	9
Jun. Secondary	0
Secondary	0
	40

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Ondobe	Edundja	8197	Edundja JSS	Gr. 8-10	065-268110	Shetunyenga H.	374	13	28.77
		8182	Edundja PS	Gr. 1-7	065-268104	Kafita K.H.	799	20	39.95
		8261	Oumbada PS	Gr. 1-7		Hailaula O.	429	13	33.00
		8657	Tuyoleni PS	Gr. 1-5		Nghishiiko A.I.	320	9	35.56
	Onamunhama	8233	Onamunhama CS	Gr. 1-10	065-260155	Hashal H.	718	19	37.79
		7904	Oshitutuma PS	Gr. 1-6	065-260140	Nghihalwa N.	337	8	42.13
		8226	Omungholyo CS	Gr. 1-9		Andreas S.	745	19	39.21
		8196	Etomba CS	Gr. 1-10		Netope P.	826	24	34.42
		8436	Okanghudi PS	Gr. 1-7		Hamutenya J.	288	7	41.14
	Okatope	8214	Okatope JSS	Gr. 8-10	065-262267	Mbidi N.	628	20	31.40
		8184	Eembidi CS	Gr. 1-8	065-262460	Shipyu B.	741	18	41.17
		8200	Mandume PS	Gr. 1-7	065-262546	Naukushu N.	867	22	39.41
		8732	Okelemba PS	Gr. 1-7		Mwahafa S.	667	16	41.69
		new	Helao Mwiinduli JPS	Gr. 1-2		Gotrieb F.	90	2	45.00
	Onamahoka	8231	Onamahoka CS	Gr. 1-10		Shikulo H.	674	20	33.70
		8241	Ondungulu PS	Gr. 1-7		Nakalemo G.S.	635	17	37.35
		8191	Enghandja PS	Gr. 1-7		Shimhanda F.	411	12	34.25
		8730	Eengushe PS	Gr. 1-6		Haimbili L.	232	7	33.14
		8495	Eexumba CS	Gr. 1-9		Elago D.	410	12	34.17
		8429	Epoli CS	Gr. 1-10	065-245437	Uusiku E.P.	603	17	35.47
	Onamukulo	8298	Onamukule	Gr. 1-10	065-264546	Namgongo R.	882	27	32.67
		9709	Onailonga JPS	Gr. 1-4		Eelu E.K.	125	4	31.25
		8499	Mwafangeyo CS	Gr. 1-9		Iyambo L.	462	13	35.54
		7903	Omhokolo PS	Gr. 1-6		Muleka E.	289	8	36.13
		8376	Otunganga CS	Gr. 1-10		Shigwandja J.M.	778	20	38.90
		8624	Onamutemo PS	Gr. 1-7		Amwele T.	314	9	34.89
		7959	Iimbili PS	Gr. 1-7		Awene L.	295	9	32.78
		8280	Mumbwenge CS	Gr. 1-10	065-264454	Makili H.	500	16	31.25
	Ondobe	8240	Ondobe JSS	Gr. 8-10	065-262424	Masule C.	461	18	25.61
		8215	Okauva PS	Gr. 1-7		Namwandi E.	347	10	34.70
		8225	Omunyekadi CS	Gr. 1-10		Ntinda E.	823	23	35.78
		8204	Ofifiya PS	Gr. 1-7	065-262425	Naholo A.K.	770	21	36.67
8199		Kornnelius CS	Gr. 1-10		Hamutenya P.	738	19	38.84	
8300		Onangwe CS	Gr. 1-10	065-262553	Mvula F.	957	24	39.88	
8378		Uukelo CS	Gr. 1-10		Munembo L.	755	21	35.95	
TOTALS							19290	537	35.92

Circuit	Cluster	Code	School	Grades	Tel. No.	Principal	Learners	Teachers	L/T Ratio
Okongo	Elia Weyulu	8428	Elia Weyulu CS	Gr.5-10	065-288413	Mukumangeni A.	496	15	33.07
		8222	Omboloka CS	Gr.1-8		Mwilima G.	316	10	31.60
		8619	Oshisho CS	Gr.1-8		Mbirimuyo S.N.	243	9	27.00
		8238	Omuuni PS	Gr.1-7		Shatipamba S.	236	7	33.71
		8722	Ondema Cs	Gr.1-10		Hambata P.	294	12	24.50
		8433	Ndahambelela JPS	Gr.1-4		Uunovene M.N.	75	3	25.00
		8654	Ohameva PS	Gr.1-7		Mudjanima R.	215	6	35.83
		8219	Oluhapa JPS	Gr.1-4		Hamunyela S.D.	58	2	29.00
	Oluwaya	8219	Oluwaya CS	Gr.1-10		Shinana L.	471	16	29.44
		8620	Onehoni PS	Gr.1-7		Kanyiki K.	117	8	14.63
		8720	Hainyeko JPS	Gr.1-4		Shiweda A.	110	4	27.50
		8723	Okalimbanombwa PS	Gr.1-6		Ndilenga R.	83	4	20.75
		8554	Onamihonga JPS	Gr.1-4		Shonana H.R.	139	4	34.75
	Oshela	8254	Oshela SS	Gr.8-12	065-288454	Shapwa J.	552	19	29.05
		8721	Namhadi JPS	Gr.1-4		Kashihakumwa B.	60	2	30.00
		8621	Shatipamba PS	Gr.1-7		Newawa S.	182	7	26.00
		8249	Onhumba PS	Gr.1-7		Shaangeni P.I.	213	6	35.50
		8022	Oupili CS	Gr.1-8		Kapulwa T.	242	8	30.25
		8734	Omushiyo JPS	Gr.1-4		Shoongeleni D.	66	2	33.00
		8235	Onandjaba JPS	Gr.1-4		Ndjuluwa W.	70	4	17.50
	Kongo	8198	Kongo PS	Gr.1-5	065-288412	Kayofa J.	309	10	30.90
		8212	Oidiva PS	Gr.1-7		Shanyengana J.	151	6	25.17
		8648	Onamafila PS	Gr.1-7		Shinedima L.	193	7	27.57
		8188	Ekoka CS	Gr.1-10		Nakale E.	354	13	27.23
		8371	Oshifitu PS	Gr.1-7		Ellago S.	243	7	34.71
		8553	Helao Nafidi JPS	Gr.1-4		Hamukwaya E.P.	103	4	25.75
	Enyana	8192	Enyana CS	Gr.1-10		Shalluyungwa R.	320	10	32.00
		8218	Olukula PS	Gr.1-7		David N.	291	7	41.57
		8243	Oshikuni JPS	Gr.1-2		Nakwatumba J.	61	2	30.50
		8217	Olukeno JPS	Gr.1-4		Hamukali L.T.	78	3	26.00
		8242	Onehanga JPS	Gr.1-4		Kamhulu E.P.	60	2	30.00
		8251	Oshamukweni CS	Gr.1-8		Ndatewapo I.	226	8	28.25
8647		Mawila JPS	Gr.1-4		Hameva S.N.	50	3	16.67	
8733		Omana JPS	Gr.1-4		Shaimemanya N.	70	3	23.33	
		Haixuxwa PS	Gr 1-2						
new		Omupini JPS	Gr.1-4		Naufiku J.	26	2	13.00	

TOTALS	6773	235	28.82
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Types of Schools in Okongo Circuit

Junior Primary	14
Primary	11
Combined	9
Jun. Secondary	0
Secondary	1
TOTAL	35

Types of schools in Ondobe Circuit

Junior Primary	3
Primary	15
Combined	15
Jun. Secondary	3
Secondary	0
TOTAL	36

Learner/Teacher Ratio for Ohangwena Region

Learners	84390
Teacher	2597
RATIO	32.50

Total schools in Ohangwena Region

Junior Primary	34
Primary	100
Combined	71
Jun. Secondary	11
Secondary	6
TOTAL	222

Appendix E: Interview questions for professional educators and parents/family members

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA – FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Professional educators’ interview questions

Introduction

Own introduction and explanation of the visit’s purpose will be first. The purpose of the visit is to talk with a principals and teachers in lower primary education schools to understand their perceptions of involvement and their experiences about how they involve parents in their children’s education in order to support learners’ academic learning and growth. I will attempt to learn and understand principals and teachers practise and secure co-operation and collaboration from parents and family members. The results can also be used as a resource for promoting this approach (parental involvement) at other schools in our country. The findings may be useful for training in-service teachers for lower primary grades in rural schools in this region and/or in the whole country. After the explanation of the purpose, participants will be asked to give their consent for the interview to be recorded. Confidentiality and anonymity will be clarified and promised, and an offer to send copies of interview transcripts to participants, if deemed necessary, will be made.

Introduction questions:

1. What is your name and where did you do your teacher education?
2. What is your major?
3. Do you live in this community?
4. What is the community like?

Main Questions

5. How would you define parental involvement?
6. How would you describe academic learning?
7. Who are the potential stakeholders with whom you share the responsibility for the academic growth of learners? Why do you regard them as potential stakeholders?
8. How do you work with the stakeholders to support the learners’ academic learning?

9. What roles in children's education should be the sole responsibility of schools and why?
10. What roles in children's education do you think should be the sole responsibility of families and why?
11. What development opportunities does your school organise for involving parents in learners' academic education?
12. What support mechanisms and strategies does your school have in place to sustain active parental involvement in children's academic education?
13. What mechanisms and options do you use to communicate with parents for the benefit of learners' learning?
14. What obstacles do you experience in promoting parental involvement in supporting learners' academic learning?
15. What do you think are the causes of those obstacles?
16. How do you overcome those obstacles?
17. What involvement activities and strategies are not compatible with this community's living conditions and why?
18. Are there any other comments that you would like to share with me in relation to parental involvement in children's academic education either at your school or in general?

Thank you for your time and information

Parents/family members interview questions

Introduction

First I will introduce myself and explain the purpose of my visit:

The purpose of my visit is to talk with a number of parents and/or families whose children attend A/B/C/D/E/F school to understand their perceptions and experiences of involvement and support in their children's academic education. My findings may be useful by serving as a resource for training in-service teachers and parents on how to support each other for the benefit of learners' academic growth in Namibia's rural lower primary schools. I will ask for participants' consent to participate in my study and for interviews to be recorded, promise confidentiality and anonymity and offer to send a copy of interview transcript if deemed necessary.

Interview questions

Introduction Questions

1. Can you please tell me your name sir/madam
2. May I please ask you about your age? How old are you?
3. How many children do you have at A/B/C etc. school?
4. What makes you to choose X school for your child(ren)?

Main Questions

5. How do you support the school to make sure that your wishes will be full- filled?
6. Why do you think it is important for you to support the school?
7. What would you like the school to allow parents to do to support and contribute to the academic learning of their children in school?
8. Describe the attitude you as a parent normally experience from the teachers and the principal of this school?
9. What would you like to see the school doing for parents to enhance the relationship between the school and parents?
10. What effect made by the parents' support for school in terms of academic education of children have you noticed?

11. Where do you think the parents' support for children's academic growth is limited and why?
12. What makes it difficult for you and other parents to contribute to and support your children's academic education?
13. What else would you like to tell me about parental involvement?

Thank you for your time and information

Appendix F: Qualitative data analysis

High parental involvement schools			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview of professional educators 	Codes	Personal memos	Themes
Description of community	Poor, no businesses, two groups in terms of understanding: understands their obligation, do not understand. Some willing to learn, expects quality education, some do not come to meetings, cannot speak English,	Demographic information, high expectations, illiterate	Barriers & Perceptions
Parental involvement (description)	Parents own the school, assist teachers, support their children's learning, send children to school on time, provide stationery, uniform, food, active participation in children's learning, relationship, put the child between, parents do lesson presentations, especially culture related content, vie children's work at school	Understanding, positive perceptions, positive climate, assist with classroom activities	
Academic learning (description)	Knowledge, skills, intention to become somebody in future, fundament, anchor of future, enhance wisdom, basic skills : reading, writing and arithmetic, communication, teacher opens the child's eyes, prepare learner to chose career	Understanding, why and what academic education, basic skills, value, education	
Potential stakeholders	Parents, pastors, headmen, nurses, regional councilors, school board, parents, support learners, provide materials, food, shelter, without support no learning, parents are first teachers, provide information about learners, community members, liaise between school and community members, management, government, build infrastructures, provide books	Link schools to community resources, health care professionals, national services, spiritual leaders, open and frequent communication, community individuals	Practice
School' responsibilities	Provide quality education, assessment, plan and prepare lessons, know subject content, know learner, explain to learners, reinforcement of rules, provision of career guidance, learning materials, parents are not trained to do some activities,		Perceptions & practice
Parents' responsibilities	Advise teachers, financial support, food, clothes, school stationery, buy school uniform, assist learners to learn reading and to do other school activities at home, inform school about child's problems, start education at home, teach children to respect adults and obey school rules, ask what children learn at school,	Positive climate, support school activities at home, technical support, good relationship	Perception & Practice
How schools work with stakeholders	Convene meetings to discuss school needs, performance, observations, year tasks, learners' behaviours, importance of providing food before children come to school. Involve them in money generating committees, school boards, invite parents for lesson observations, ask government/ministry of education to provide teaching and learning materials, community members to assist with teaching esp. culture related content, advise parents on how to assist learners, get advice from parents on how to teach slow learners, communicate with parents, be friendly to them,	Linking parents to community resources, positive climate, communication, power sharing, knowledge opportunities for parents, involve parents in technical support	Practice
How schools involve parents in development	Meetings about importance of education, literacy education classes, book inspection, individual	Knowledge development opportunities	Practice



opportunities	parent-teacher talk and show parents how to assist their children with reading at home		
Mechanisms to sustain involvement	Involve parents in preparation of events, very low priced school uniform, school board members liaison, explain value of involvement, encourage attendance of literacy lessons, parents as guest speakers	Positive climate, knowledge development opportunities, power sharing, use of community resources	Practice
Communication mechanisms	Letters, radio, learners, councilors, fellow teachers, meetings, parent days, neighbours	Communication options	Practice
Obstacles experienced	Poverty, unemployment, no electricity, flood, busy parents, male parents have no time for literacy classes, inability to pay school development fund, learners' absenteeism, poor performance, learners come half way to school, government officials do not visit lower primary grades, lack of equipments, parents do not respond to invitations, long distances, lack of understanding, poverty	Poverty, prejudice, ignorance, undervaluing of lower primary education	Barriers
Causes of obstacles	Too much domestic work, unemployment, lack of understanding, guardians do not send children/orphans to school on days they get financial support, parents go sell marula juice while children look after hoses, domestic animals, long distances, ignorance, fear of embarrassment	Poverty, lack of understanding, low self-esteem	Barriers
How schools deal with the obstacles	Discuss with school board members, ask school board to talk to parents, discuss in parent meetings, solar electricity, establish a project, employ community members, free uniform to orphans and vulnerable children, advise parents on possible ways to generate money.	Power sharing and decision-making, positive climate	Practice
Additional information	Difficult to get awards for parents, the government to build bridges, parents need to visit schools, without good relationship no progress, parents should pay school development fund.	Obstacles, recommendations,	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview of parents 			
Reasons for choosing the schools	Like the educate offered, nearest school, to be able to observe school activities, make sure that children are doing their school work,	Positive perceptions	Perceptions
How parents support schools	Share knowledge with learners and with what they can do, pay school development fund, buy stationery and books, attend meetings, give advice, teach stories, donate awards (floating trophy), serve in school boards,	Financial support, positive climate, decision-making	Practice
Importance of parental involvement	Discuss about education and school needs with teachers in meetings, focus on learners together, encourage teachers to work hard, need to take part in education, support new and in experienced teachers	Good relationship	Practice
What parents would like to be allowed to do	To contribute to the provision of teaching to learn through lesson observation, materials in order to be able to support children's learning at home, be visited by teachers' at home, known by teachers, motivates and excites them, be welcomed and treated as partners, contribute to teaching, advise teachers,	Technical support, positive climate	Attitude, Practice
Experiences of teachers' attitude	Well behaviours, respect, play major roles in meetings, teachers' satisfaction with parents' participation, good relationship, understand each other, let each other know about their mistakes	Positive attitude	Perceptions, Practice
What school should do to enhance relationship with parents	Allow them to sit in lesson presentations, visit them at home, feel valued, teach, continue meetings, respected, buy computers, build school libraries, buy more reading books, increase chances of book inspection, 2x per month	Technical support, positive climate, attitude, relationship	Practice
Effect of parental support	Good performance, good behaviours, hard working, respect, children know how to count and read	importance	



How parent support is limited	Estrangement, alienation, low self esteem, teacher do not give us enough freedom to contribute to actual teaching in classrooms, limited chances of looking at children's work, monitor teachers' sufficient marking,	Parents are willing to get involved, positive attitude, are able, motivated	Barriers
Why parents find it difficult to contribute and support	Lack of understanding, preference of drinking, habit of not going to meetings, lack of school policy on involvement, lack of ownership of policies at school, disrespect, belief that parents do not understand education, limited freedom to participate in education of their children, illiterate, unemployment, nothing to eat in the house, no money to buy school uniform	Difficulties experienced by parents	Barriers
Additional comments	Emphasis of involvement by the government, children to be encouraged to work hard, parents to be encouraged to support education of their children		
Intermediate parental involvement schools			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview of professional educators 			
Description of community	Small but fine, better understanding, visit school, old, responsible, send children to school, will be no uneducated child, supportive, build classrooms (sheds) donate money although poor	Demographic information, how community support	
Parental involvement (description)	Visit school, ensure learners' punctuality and attendance, monitor teaching, observe lessons, invited or not, children to school on time, attend meetings, interaction, encourage children to study hard, give children food and clothes, participate in school organization and development	Opportunities for knowledge development, technical support, power sharing, help with school activities at home, positive climate,	Practice
Academic education (description)	Teach vowels, letters, language, computation, writing, physical education, religious and moral education, how to read, write, count and talk properly, work with fellow learners, love each other, help each other, life skills, basic skills, care of environment, health safety and nutrition	Development of basic skills, positive climate,	Practice
Potential stake holders	Parents, they live with children, help us in teaching, responsible for teaching talking, safety, give food, know childhood, background, ministry, provide syllabi	Use of community resources, positive climate, technical support	Practice
Schools' responsibilities	Prepare daily lessons, teaching, monitor work, assess, grade learners' work, promote learners, inform parents, provide teaching and learning facilities and materials, make sure teaching according to syllabi,		Practice
Parents' responsibilities	Provide teaching and learning materials, provide clothes, feed children, will not sleep in class learners' wellbeing, send children to school on daily basis, come to school to motivate teachers, give moral support	Technical support, good relationship, positive climate	Practice
How schools work with stake holders	Invite them to school, observe teaching, teach stories, how to make pots, ask the to assist children with home work, involve then when experience problems with learners, inspect children's books, share ideas how to help poor performers, encourage them to give enough time for school work at home, special committees, policy formulation processes, discuss behaviours, get syllabi and scheme of work from the ministry	Involvement in policy formulation, classroom support/ technical support, educational opportunities for parents	Practice
Development opportunities	Tours excites learners and pleases parents, meetings,	Educational opportunities	Perceptions;



for parents	give advise how to be with children, guests from community to talk to parents on how to be with children, lesson observations, children act out, share information on HIV and AIDS	for knowledge development, use of community resources	Practice
Mechanisms to sustain involvement	Contact becomes daily practice,	Communication, positive climate	
Communication mechanisms	Meetings, letters, learners, neighbours, radios, churches, cellphones	Communication options	
Obstacles	Children refuse to go to school, parents undermine their authority, scares materials and resources, lack of buildings, lack of water, no building for libraries, lack of vision, regard invitation to schools a waste of time, learners represented by fellow children at meetings, sheds too cold during winter, children look after cattle, work in the field, unable to pay school development fund, overcrowded classrooms, no difficulties	Difficulties, low self-esteem, insufficient infrastructures, priority of other issues than education	Barriers
Strategies to address obstacles	Invite parents for discussions about children's weaknesses due to absenteeism, how this could be prevented, importance of attendance, parents bring children to school, parents give reports about children, parents donate whatever they have, baskets, pottery, millet, use principal's office as library, discourage children representation, ask parents to share the importance responding to invitations	Solutions: how schools deal with barriers	Barriers/How to deal with; Practice
Incompatible activities	Donation of money, cannot think of any, asking community members to teach because they lack understanding, overcrowded classrooms,	How they deal with, Barriers	Practice
Additional comments	Thanks for choosing our school for 1 st and 2 nd round, parents must feel free to share with schools, good if parents and teachers work together to produce leaders for tomorrow, respect my visit, visit emphasized the idea of making parents comrades in children's education	Relationship	Perception; Practice
• Interview of parents			
Reasons for choosing the school	Closeness, likes the education offered,	Attitude	Perception
How parents support the school	Always visit, donate for building infrastructure, pay school development fund, remind learners of homework, send the to school on time, ask the what they have done at school daily, assist children when doing homework	Good relationship, assist with school related activities,	Practice
Importance of parent support	Parents loose if they do not support children, education is important, do not want to be blamed, want children to be educated, development and civilization, create good relationship between parents and teachers, protect children from cold weather	Positive climate, high aspirations	Perception
What parents would like to be allowed to do more	Sustainable relationship, visit , observe, assist teaching, look into children's books, encourages them to motivate learners to work at home,	Technical support	Practice
Experience of teachers' attitude	Respect, mutual discussion, welcome, permitted to visit, good relationship, teachers inform them what happens at school, problematic learners, parents attend to them	Positive climate, good relationship	Perception
What school should do to enhance relationship	Proclaim rules, principals with same rules, provide information to enable parents to assist, create good relationship, school board to monitor attendance starting and closing time, parents to observe, monitor lesson planning and preparations	Opportunities for knowledge development, good relationship,	Perception; Practice
Effect of parental support	Children do well, become committed, well performance, always do homework	Importance of parental involvement	Perception
How parent support is limited	No limitation, no idea, not really		

Parents' difficulties to contribute and support	Absenteeism, late-coming, defensive parents, lack of understanding, insufficient teaching aids, insufficient classrooms, lack of water, too much drinking, work at home, habit of sending children to school and not bother they learn or not	Illiteracy, poverty	Barriers
Additional comments	More information, educational opportunities	Parents desire opportunities for knowledge development, indicate understanding and have high aspirations for their children	Perceptions
Low parental involvement schools			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview of professional educators 			
Description of a community	Good relationship between community members and school, most parents not educated, do not motivate learners to love learning, do not know the value of education, some understand, respond to invitations, children do not perform beyond grade 10, guardians do not use financial support for orphans' education, children live and grow in poverty, do not go anywhere in life, uncommitted, weak in sending children to school	Difficulties experienced in the process of parental involvement	Perceptions; experience; Practice
Parental involvement (description))	Visit school, relationship with teachers, monitor teachers' work, assist children at home with schoolwork, pay school fund, do activities at school, ask children what they learn at school, do observation, participate in teaching, provide labour, suggestion on school problems, monitor quality of teachers' work, provide children with food before they come to school, send children to school on time, reduce hose chores,	Parental involvement is when parents are contributing to financial and material support, good relationship, positive climate, creation of educational opportunities for parents	Practice
Academic learning (description)	Education that shapes the child's future, makes the child becomes somebody and help the nation, child respect norms and values, teach reading, writing counting and talking correctly – form better foundation, life development acceptable behaviours, welcoming visitors	Professional educators have high aspirations and expectations for their learners, regard academic education as teaching basic skills, teachers create positive climate for involvement,	Perceptions
Potential stakeholders	Ministry of education – provides teaching and learning materials, policies, syllabi, teachers – teach, parents – take care of children, send children to school, know the child's background, teach culture-related content, pay school development fund, teachers cannot educate children alone, teachers discuss learners' problems with, Community – first to be approached for school needs, contribute to the erection of buildings, children belong to the , nurses – explain to learners and parents how to prevent and take care of HIV and AIDS infected and affected people, business people provide transport and money	Potential stakeholders schools with whom schools share responsibility of learners' education, positive climate, financial support, use of community resources	Practice
Schools' responsibilities	Formulate school rules, keep order at school, distribute work, provide needed materials, teach children how to read and write	Usual responsibilities	Practice
Parents' responsibilities	Make parents the focus of relationship, assist parents to learn reading letters, paying school fund otherwise negotiate, provide clothes, food, send children to school on time, ask children what they learn at school, prepare children for social interaction, teach them to obey school rules, discuss learners' school	Creation of knowledge development opportunities, positive climate, involve parents in teaching (technical support) in teaching, have good	Practice



	related problems with teachers,	relationship	
How school work with stakeholders	Discuss school problems, learners late-coming to school, need for classroom observation, roles of parents, freedom to visit school, participation in lesson presentations, take decisions together, inform community members that school belongs to them, ask for parents' advice, work with parents as friends, make parents work on school fence, involve them in money generating projects	Opportunities for knowledge development, provision of classroom technical support by parents, creation of positive climate, financial support	Practice
Development opportunities for parents	All parents' meetings – discuss how parents can help children, importance of visiting schools, look at their children's work, classroom observations, special discussions for parents to poor performers, discuss importance of monitoring school progress	Creation of knowledge development opportunities for parents and positive climate to parental involvement, maintain of good relationship	Practice
Mechanisms to sustain involvement	Show and discuss children's performance with parents, award hard working learners, give parents certificates of appreciation, parent-teacher meetings every term, record discussions for next meetings referrals, provide agenda before every meeting	Communication options used by the schools, creation of knowledge development opportunities for parents	Practice
Communication mechanisms	Letters, meetings, individual and direct messages through learners, neighbours, churches, radios, morning assembly village headmen	Communication options used by the schools	Practice
Obstacles experienced	Absenteeism due to HIV and AIDS, death, funerals, other related diseases, learners who live with elderly people, lack of understanding, long distances, late-coming to meetings, teachers are unable to visit parents at home, children live alone, children are represented by fellow children at meetings, parents work far from home, parents misuse orphans' money poverty, parents do not make time to come to school, too much excuses	Problems experienced in the process of parental involvement	Barriers
Strategies for addressing obstacles	Headmen talk to their people, regional councilors explain, suspension, involve parents in school development discussions, teachers alternate, teachers visit parents at home	Use of community resources, community options, creation of positive climate	How to deal with barriers
Additional comments	Just thanks, ministry of education takes too long to deliver materials, no comment, nothing to say	Parents appreciate	
• Interview of parents			
Reasons for choosing the school	Nearest, children still small, education of children, liking, habit,	Just because they are the nearest schools	
How parents support schools	Being members of school boards, ask teachers to inform them when children do not arrive at school, tell children to learn, buy school uniform, pay school development fund, send children to school on a daily basis, accompany children until they arrive at school, give donations, provide teaching aids,	Parents are involved in decision-making bodies, they experienced good relationships with teachers, they contributed to the creation of positive climate, they provide financial support and classroom technical support, have high aspirations for their children	Practice
Importance of parent support	Children will not be like us, children are educated, education produces teachers, nurses, officers, for children to get jobs, children will help, children will develop the school further	Parents have high aspirations	Perceptions
What parents would like to be allowed to do	School board members to talk to parents, reprimand them to release children to go to school, contribute other things than money, teach stories and how to make traditional materials	Use of community resources, involvement of parents in classroom technical support	
Experience of teachers' attitude	Fine, discuss learners' problems together, good treatment, respect trust, confidentiality about	Positive attitude towards involvement	Perceptions



	problems, some parents do not cooperate with schools,		
What schools should do enhance relationship	Development, learners' progress discussion of problems a habit, contact parents when there is a problem, increase buildings	Communication options used by schools	Perceptions
Effects of parental support	Children change attitude towards learning and become serious, committed, progress well, become somebody educated in life, learners understand	Importance of parental involvement	Perceptions
How parent support is limited	Poverty and unemployment prevents parents from paying school development fund, lack of understanding of education, unable to identify needs and mistakes, teachers' weaknesses	Difficulties experienced by parents	Barriers
Difficulties experienced by parents to contribute and support	Lack of cooperation among parents, division, misunderstanding, lack of understanding, lack of communication from parents, lack of income,	Difficulties experienced by parents	Barriers
Additional comments	Parents can provide teaching aids, no comments	Parents provide technical and material support	

Appendix G: Objectives of the interview questions

Objectives of the interview questions for Professional educators

Interview question asked (for professional educators)	Reason for asking the question	What you wish to do with evidence
1. What is your name and where did you do your teacher education?	To establish a good rapport with the interviewee and learn the institutional provider of his/her professional training.	Introduction questions aimed at establishing professional background of and forming rapport with an interviewee.
2. What is your major?	To determine their professional educational background and to find out whether the interviewee had been appropriately placed.	To find out whether the interviewee was teaching the level and the subject he/she was trained to teach.
3. Do you live in this community?	To find out whether the interviewee was part of the community.	To establish the interviewee's relation to the community.
4. What is the community like?	To find out whether the interviewee knew the community he/she is expected to work with.	To learn about the community in which the school is situated.
5. How would you define parental involvement?	To establish the interviewee's knowledge and understanding of parental involvement.	To secure the interviewees' concept of involvement
6. How would you describe academic education?	To establish the interviewees' knowledge and understanding of academic learning.	To discover the interviewees' concept of academic learning.
7. Who are the potential stakeholders with who you share the responsibility for the academic growth of learners? Why do you regard them potential stakeholders?	To ascertain whether they are aware of partnership between themselves and learners' homes.	To determine their understanding of the importance of working with parents in children's education.
8. How do you work with the stakeholders to support the learners' academic learning?	To determine whether they involve parents in academic activities for educating learners.	To discover the strategies interviewees normally use to involve parents in academic activities.
9. What roles in children's education should be the sole responsibility of schools and why?	To determine their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in children's education.	To establish their comprehension of their (school's) roles and responsibility regarding children's education.
10. What roles in children's education do you think should be the sole responsibility of families and why?	To determine their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of families in children's education.	To uncover their perception regarding the roles and responsibilities of families in children's education.
11. What development opportunities does your school organise for involving parents in learners' academic education?	To determine whether schools organize developmental opportunities for parents as part of the processes of involving parents.	To discover developmental opportunities schools provide to parents as a means of empowering them for active involvement.
12. What support mechanisms and strategies does your school have in place to sustain	To establish how schools maintain their processes of actively involving parents in education of learners.	To discover sustainable methods and procedures for active parental involvement in education of

active parental involvement in children's academic education?		learners.
13. Do you think these mechanisms are good and feasible for parents of this community?	To determine their rationality behind using those mechanisms.	To establish justifications for specific methods of involving rural parents in learners' education.
14. What mechanisms and options do you use to communicate with parents for the benefit of learners' learning?	To determine whether schools communicate with parents and if so, how.	To establish the communication options schools use to get in touch with parents.
15. What obstacles do you experience in promoting parental involvement in supporting learners' academic learning?	To determine the stumbling blocks to parental involvement.	To establish the main stumbling blocks and area of needs.
16. What do you think are the causes of those obstacles?	To determine the sources and grounds of obstacles to involvement.	
17. How do you overcome those obstacles?	To determine whether schools do something to address the obstacles.	To establish strategies for improvement.
18. What involvement activities and strategies are not compatible with this community's living condition and why?	To determine their knowledge of appropriate activities as determined by the living conditions of the community.	To expose the compatible involvement activities and strategies with the rural condition.
19. Are there any other comments that you would like to share with me in relation to parental involvement in children's academic education either at your school or in general?	To accentuate any other issue of concern to respondents.	To establish any ideas vital to respondents but not covered by questions.

Objectives of interview questions for parents

Interview question asked (for parents)	Reason for asking the question	What you wish to do with evidence
1. What is your name?	To establish a good rapport with the interviewee.	Introductory question like that aimed at forming rapport with an interviewee.
2. How many children do you have at this school?	To determine the number of children the interviewee had at the school.	
3. What makes you to choose this specific school for your child(ren)?	To determine the interviewee's rationale for choosing the specific school for his/her child.	To establish the interviewee's perception of the school.
4. How do you support the school to make sure that your wishes will be fulfilled?	To determine whether an interviewee contributes to the fulfillment of his/her wishes.	To establish specific support parents give to schools for the sake of their children's education.
5. Why do you think it is important for you to support the school?	To determine whether an interviewee is aware of his responsibility of supporting schools in education of his/her child.	To establish parents' understandings of the importance of parental involvement.
6. What exactly would you like the school to allow parents do as part of their support to contribute to the academic learning of their children in school?	To determine whether an interviewee receives freedom of supporting his/her child in any form.	To establish things parents would like to do freely as part of their contribution for their children's learning.

7. Describe the attitude you as a parent normally experience from the teachers and the principal of this school?	To determine an interviewee's experience of teachers and principals' attitude towards them (parents).	To establish the relationship that exists between parents, teachers and principals.
8. What would you like to see the school doing for parents to enhance the relationship between the school and parents?	To determine whether parents are satisfied with the existing relationship between themselves and teachers and principals.	To establish suggestions for improving the relationship between parents, teachers and principals.
9. What effect made by the parents' support for school in terms of academic education of children, have you noticed?	To determine whether an interviewee monitors his/her child(ren)'s learning to find out whether their contributions make any difference in learners' academic education.	To establish the effect of parental involvement in learners' academic education.
10. Where do you think the parents' support for children's academic growth is limited and why?	To determine the extent to which an interviewee appreciate the opportunity for supporting his/her child(ren)'s academic education.	To establish limitations for parental involvement.
11. What makes it difficult for you and other parents to contribute to and support the children's academic education?	To determine whether an interviewee experiences difficulties in his/her endeavor to support his/her child(ren)'s academic education.	To establish the stumbling blocks for parental involvement.
12. What else would you like to tell me about parental involvement?	To accentuate any other issue of concern to an interviewee.	To establish any ideas vital to parents but not covered by questions.