Parental involvement in a low-fee

independent secondary school in South Africa

by

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DECLARATION

I, Taneeta Kooverjee, declare that this study, entitled

Parental Involvement in a Low-Fee Independent Secondary School in South Africa,

which I hereby submit for the degree Masters in Education at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and that the dissertation has never been submitted for any degree at another university. All the sources in the report have been indicated and acknowledged by means of direct or indirect references.

Signed: …………………………………. Date: ……………………………….

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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.*

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa. The relevant available research indicated that participatory input by parents should be seen as contributing to improving the efficiency of schools; this can be applied equally in a low-fee independent school. However, whereas there are a number of studies in the literature on parental involvement in independent schools, there is a minimal number on parental involvement in low-fee independent schools. According to the few applicable relevant reports when low-fee independent schools were created the socio-economic status of the families of the children attending the schools was a contributing factor in explaining and influencing parental involvement.

This apparent gap in the literature encouraged the researcher to conduct a more comprehensive study which explored the nature of parental involvement in an independent secondary school in South Africa - more specifically, a low-fee one. A qualitative research methodology was deemed most appropriate for this case study. Data was gathered by using a purposive sampling method which involved interviews, observation and document analysis. As this is a research report of limited scope for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of a lectured Master's degree that consists largely of course-work, a small sample of school stakeholders in an independent secondary school was selected.

The conceptual lens of Joyce Epstein's typology of parental involvement in schools was used as a basis for the study. The framework informed the data collection methods by referring to the different types of parental involvement, namely: Basic Obligations of Parents; Basic Obligations of Schools; Parent Involvement in Schools; Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy; and Collaboration and Exchanges.

Overall, the study found that in terms of the perceptions of the participants interviewed, there was a probability that families' socio-economic backgrounds

had an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of communication in terms of the mode and language used. The results show that even though there was an attempt to improve parental involvement in this low-fee independent secondary school, it was still lacking.

The study recommends that communication and relationships between parents and the school should be improved through the development of a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC would have the potential to aid the designing, drafting and implementation of policies and procedures. In addition, the findings of further research could assist in closing the gap in communication between parents, teachers and the community.

DECLARATION OF EDITING

DECLARATION OF EDITING

05 October 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have language edited and proof-read the dissertation by **Taneeta Kooverjee** entitled:

EXPLORING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN A LOW-FEE INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SOUTH AFRICA

The language editing/proof-reading process included the checking of spelling, punctuation, syntax and expression. An attempt was made to simplify complex sentences and, where necessary, combine short sentences to clarify meaning. Attention was given to the use of various language elements, such as prepositions, consistency in language usage and formatting as well as capital letters and punctuation.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

South African Schools Act (1996)

The South African Schools Act (1996) describes two types of schools – public and independent schools (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008).

Public School

A public school is an ordinary public school established by government; some are for learners with specials needs, and others are for specialized focus on talents (South African Schools Act, DoE 1996).

Independent School

An independent school is a school which is established and maintained by any person at his or her own cost (South African Schools Act, DoE 1996).

Parents

Parents can be identified as members of single-parent families, child-headed households, extended families, and multi-generational families. The reason for these multiple descriptions is because of the constant change which takes place in a multi-cultural and restructured society (Ndebele, 2015).

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is defined as a systematic approach which involves supporting and educating families; increasing children's educational and academic experiences; establishing, sustaining and improving the communication between learners' homes and school; and enriching the curriculum with the involvement and contribution of parents (Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the past decade, the global trend in the privatisation of education has resulted in a significant growth of independent schools in developing countries, such as South Africa (Hàrmà, 2013). The relevant available research suggests that the importance of this growth in independent schools is due to school desegregation, whereby the practice of separating learners according to race was ended (Clotfelter, 2004). The proliferation of the independent schooling sector aided as a catalyst in fulfilling children's constitutional rights to basic education and closed the gap in quality education in the public sector (Languille, 2016).

However, this growth has not been significant in certain provinces in South Africa where there are large communities from low socio-economic backgrounds (Languille, 2016), such as the Eastern Cape which, in 2000, had the lowest rate of enrolment in independent schools (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008). Statistically, in South Africa nine out of ten learners attend public schools while one in ten attend an independent school. This suggests that even though the independent sector is growing, it is still small. Research also indicates that in 2016 eighty-two percent of learners who attended independent schools lived in urban areas while the remainder resided in rural areas (Lehohla, 2016).

Historically, private or independent education has been associated with privilege. However, low-fee independent schools have also been established for relatively poor families (Languille, 2016). These schools provide parents with a quality service which they feel is worth paying for when compared to the cheaper government option (Hàrmà, 2013; Porter, 2011).

In order to increase the efficiency and quality of education in both home and school environments, the involvement of parents in education is considered to be an important contributing factor (Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016, Porter, 2011; Chisley, 2014). Several global studies have found that parental involvement increases learners' learning and academic success (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1998, Porter, 2011; Chisley, 2014).

However, according to the relevant research, the socio-economic status of families is a contributing factor when explaining and influencing parental involvement; parents from low socio-economic backgrounds appear to participate less in school activities than those from a higher socio-economic background (Ndebele, 2015). Multiple studies indicate that parental involvement in learning activities is low in public schools where low-income households and least educated and minority parents are involved (Porter, 2011; Ndebele, 2015). The reason seems to be that parents with a limited education may have had negative experiences with the education system and its processes which results in the mistrust of, and feeling uncomfortable with, the school environment (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1998). The limited involvement of parents may be observed in their poor attendance of parent meetings; limited involvement in fundraising events; and minimal interest in their children's schoolwork (Ndebele, 2015).

The invested involvement of parents can occur both inside and outside the school, with the intention of improving their children's education as well as their schools (Naong & Morolong, 2011). Various types of parental involvement make an impact on classroom activities and the governance of schools; on surrounding communities; and learner achievement (Epstein, 1988). Therefore, parental involvement should be proactive and it should have no harmful or negative effect on the schools or on the learners' education (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003). In addition, research suggests that parents tend to become more involved in the educational process of their children when they believe that their children's teachers involve parents in many ways (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1998). In order to establish partnerships between parents and teachers, schools should

introduce meaningful strategies for parents to be involved in proactive, regular and persistent communication (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1998). A school's success and effectiveness may be achieved through communication with, and decision-making by, stakeholders, which includes parents (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Chisley, 2014).

There is a body of literature on parental involvement in independent schools which focuses on the advantages of independent schooling and the services they offer (Brunello & Rocco, 2008; Languille, 2016; Härmä, 2013) and there is also some literature on parental involvement in low socio-economic schools concerning the benefits and challenges associated with them (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003; Peled & Rosenblatt, 2002; Motala & Dieltiens, 2008). However, there are only a limited number of studies that deal with parental involvement in low-fee independent schools.

Therefore, the intention of this study was to explore the nature and management of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school that serves low socio-economic communities. This is because many challenges and obstacles are experienced in managing low-fee independent schools, one of which is parent involvement (Crozier & Reay, 2005); many parents, generally, find it difficult to assume their governance roles (Naong & Morolong, 2011; Chisley, 2014).

1.2.   PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent school and how this involvement is managed in the school.

1.3.   RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As a teacher at a low-fee independent school, the researcher was interested in investigating the nature of the communication between the school and the parents.

From her personal experience, she had noted that parent meetings only took place once a term when report cards were issued to the parents of the learners, and that some learners collected their report cards unaccompanied by any parent/guardian; that minimal encouragement was provided in involving parents; and that learner achievement was poor. She regarded these negative aspects as the result of poor involvement of parents and possibly had a detrimental impact on the success of the school.

Therefore, in terms of literature and her past experience of, and interest in, the functioning of a low-fee independent school, the researcher deemed it important to delve more deeply into the nature and management of parental involvement at a low-fee school. In the existing relevant research, evidence suggests that parents who are more involved with their children's schoolwork are those from up-market suburban areas and from high affluent socio-economic backgrounds (Ndebele, 2015). It is also maintained that parents who claim to have adequate resources to assist with their children's education are those of high socio-economic status' (Ndebele, 2015). The research literature cites distinct differences between low and high socio-economic level parents connected with public schools (Ndebele, 2015; Porter, 2011; Clotfelter, 2004). However, there is a gap to data about low socio-economic independent schools and this motivated the researcher to conduct a comprehensive study which would highlight the challenges of parental involvement in a low socio-economic independent school.

It was anticipated that this study would assist in filling the gap which exists concerning parental involvement in education, but more specifically, in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa.

1.4.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question was: *What is the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee* independent *secondary school in South Africa, and how is this involvement managed in the school?*

The sub-questions which serve to inform the main question are the following:

1.4.1. *What is the nature of parental involvement at the selected low-fee* independent *secondary school?*

1.4.2. *What factors facilitate parental involvement at the selected low-fee* independent *secondary school?*

1.4.3. *What factors hinder parental involvement at the selected low-fee independent secondary school?*

1.4.4. *How is parental involvement managed in the selected school?*

1.5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was chosen to explore the nature and management of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa. One independent secondary school was used as a case study for this research. As this study is of limited scope, a group of 8 participants were used as the sample size for the interviews. Participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. In addition, a parent-teacher report card meeting was observed; and documents were analysed to ensure the trustworthiness of data.

1.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Joyce Epstein's six types of parental involvement developed in 1988 and extended in 1991. The typology generates approaches on how to increase parental involvement in various ways. These approaches are based on six types of parental involvement: basic obligations of parents; basic obligations of schools; parental involvement in schools; parental involvement in learning activities at home; and parental involvement in governance and advocacy; as well as collaboration and exchanges (Epstein, 1988). This framework guided the process of the research in exploring the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa.

1.7.   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study cannot be generalized because the case study is limited to the sampling of one school and only a few participants due to the availability of resources and time constraints. However, the findings do provide insights into parental involvement in one low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa that is located in a semi-urban area.

1.8.   STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report consists of the following six chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides a background to the study. It gives a definition of parental involvement and its significance in a schooling environment. It also outlines the problem statement; rationale; purpose of the study; research design and methodology; conceptual framework; and limitations of the study.

- Chapter 2 contains a review of the relevant available literature dealing with the topic - parental involvement. It explores parental involvement globally and nationally, and focuses particularly on the growth of independent schools; the emergence of low-fee independent schools; the roles of parents; influences of parental involvement; and managing parental involvement.

- Chapter 3 discusses the conceptual framework which was used to guide the study underpinned by Joyce Epstein's 6 types of parental involvement.

- Chapter 4 presents the methodology of the study and justifies its use. It sets out considerations related to the research approach, sampling model, research setting, participant selection, document sample and data collecting tools. It also explains the method of data analysis, which is followed by ethical considerations.

- Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study under six theme headings that correspond with Joyce Epstein's 6 types of parental involvement.

- Chapter 6 presents conclusions reached based on the findings to the research questions of the study and makes recommendations emanating from the study's findings.

1.9.   CONCLUSION

This chapter is an overview of the research process and explains the scope of the study. It has provided a background to the study and reasons for embarking on it. The next chapter, Chapter 2, presents a review of literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

As this study was undertaken to explore and understand the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school and how this involvement is managed in one selected school in South Africa, it was necessary to first review the relevant available literature related to the topic. The first section of this chapter focuses on international perspectives and highlights the various parental involvement phenomena identified in specific countries. Then the growth of independent schools in and around South Africa is explored, looking particularly at the emergence of low-fee independent schools, parental involvement and parents' roles in schools and the management of parental involvement.

2.2   GLOBALISED EDUCATION

With globalization and the advent of neo-liberalism, education has undergone substantial changes that include school governance becoming democratised and decentralized to increase accountability (Ng, 2013). An example of this holistic growth is found in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No. 108 of 1996 where the amendments are based on the concept of a democracy which is representative and participatory and incorporates accountability. Accountability ensures that responsibility is shared amongst members of an organisation to improve the responsiveness of formal procedures. A participatory democracy includes individuals who participate in decision-making processes within organisations or institutions, thereby, allowing for more commitment and input (Smit & Oosthuizen, 2011).

Neo-liberalism highlights ideas of management, accountability privatisation and decentralisation (Pomuti & Weber, 2014). Decentralisation refers to how power and authority is shifted within a specific structure (Pomuti & Weber, 2014).

Koross, Ngware and Sang (2009) maintain that an important aspect of decentralisation in schools is parental involvement; a typical school structure consists of a principal, teachers, parents and the community.

There are several countries where accountability encourages parental involvement but the extent of this involvement differs from country to country, and from school to school. The following examples show how parental involvement is managed within systems in different countries.

In Kenya, owing to the greater decentralisation of management teams, high schools changed their decision-making strategies to make parents more accountable in terms of the expectations of schools. However, where changes were made, more stakeholders were required to enhance effectiveness (Koross, *et al.*, 2009). The result was that parents contributed more in terms of financial, intellectual and physical resources as they became important stakeholders. The more resources that could be accessed, the better schools functioned in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, therefore, more parental involvement was required. Koross, *et al.* (2009) recommend that school governing bodies (SGBs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) should encourage and enforce parental involvement in the activities of schools. Similarly, in New Zealand, decentralised SGB's largely consist of parents which create a balance of power in terms of an efficient administration. Parents are involved in decision-making, problem-solving and administrative planning (Robinson, *et al.,* 1994).

In Hong Kong, School-Based Management (SBM) was developed to establish a platform to involve parents in the process of policy-making because they understood the needs of the schools and of the learners on a different level (Ng, 2013). Parents bring an outside perspective, and according to Koross, *et al.* (2009), this enhanced school effectiveness. A similar concept was applied in England where parental involvement was also important; parents are involved in strategically directing schools with vision; overseeing the management of schools

in terms of finances; and holding the teachers to account for academic performance (Okeke, 2014).

2.3   GROWTH IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Over the past decade, a notable growth has occurred in the establishment of independent schools. African countries, such as Uganda, Malawi and Tanzania have shown an incredible growth of 60%, 25% and 40%, respectively, in independent schools (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008). These schools have been created for the country's wealthiest citizens (Heyneman & Stern, 2014). The reasons for this growth appear to include the following: to close the gap of fairly distributing educational facilities and resources; to meet the increasing competition from other institutions offering international educational qualifications; and to accommodate the liberalisation of economic activity (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008).

In South Africa, there is a substantial institutional gap which is situated between a small elite sector reserved for the wealthy and a large under–resourced sector reserved for the poor. The small elite sector demand high school fees in return for high quality education, while the large under–resourced sector provides a quality of education which has been subject to decay (Languille, 2016). The gap between the two sectors was brought about by historical choices made by South African governments and their education systems and resulted in an unequal distribution of quality education based on social class and race (Chisholm, 2005) as well as the configuration of public, non–profit independent and for–profit independent sectors (Kitaev, 2007). Throughout the post– apartheid period, there has been a phenomenal paradigm shift in the growth of educational privatisation which has accelerated greatly due to business–oriented investment (Languille, 2016).

According to Hofmeyr and Lee (2002), there were two reasons for the growth in the number of independent schools in South Africa; firstly, there was an excessive demand for education - more than the state could provide and,

secondly, there was a demand for differentiated education in terms of quality. Brunello and Rocco (2008) maintain that parents are more attracted to independent schools than they are to public ones because of the perceived quality of education that they provide and, hence, the growth in independent schools. Languille (2016) believes that for pragmatic reasons parents have opted for independent schools because of deteriorating conditions in public schools as well as the intensity of inequality that exists in South African education.

2.4   EMERGENCE OF LOW-FEE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Low-fee independent schools were created to fill the gap between institutions that accompanied learners in terms of social class and racial bias. Wealthy families traditionally used independent non-government schools because of the lack of quality teaching and learning in the public education system. More recently, this has become a trend amongst low socio-economic communities as well. According to the literature, the trend is more evident in developing countries because of an oversupply of teachers, hidden costs in government schools, high private tuition, poor public performance and religious preference (Heyneman & Stern, 2014).

In India, for example, the number of independent schools has grown immensely. Härmä (2003) is of the opinion that low fees are determined by three factors, namely: the socio-economic status of the community in the area; school fees that other schools in the area charge; and the quality of schools which include factors, such as infrastructure, resources and qualified educators, among others. Unfortunately, many low-fee independent schools do not operate in buildings specifically built as schools and, hence, they do not generally comply with expected school standards (Härmä, 2013).

Low-fee independent schools started off as small and disconnected; they 'mushroomed' in lower socio-economic areas around the world. This began a trend in global education where privatisation had become widespread. According to relevant research in recent years a paradigm shift has occurred with the

development of two wave models that could be distinguished in the movement to low-fee independent schools (Verger, *et al.,* 2016); the first was the small family business model and the second was the corporate branded model. The literature suggests that South Africa focused on the first wave model, where independent schools were made affordable for the low socio-economic communities (Languille, 2016). However, due to the evolution of global responses in education, the second wave model has gained prominence. This wave was composed of three perspectives: firstly, low-fee independent schools should not be taken at face value; secondly, they did not emerge to operate equally as they were primarily targeted at middle-income countries surrounded by economic growth; and thirdly, low-fee independent schools created a chain of service providers that aimed at making a profit by reaching out to the markets - thereby minimizing inequalities (Srivastava, 2016). Therefore, the second wave of low-fee independent schools emerged by promotion of choice and competition in quality education for all (Languille, 2016).

In South Africa the extent of poverty in rural areas contributed to independent schooling flourishing (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008). According to Motala and Dieltiens in 2008 South Africa had a poverty level of 45% and extreme poverty of between 25% and 30%, where adults were earning less than R195 per month. This means that parents were not able to send their children to independent schools that relied on the payment of school fees and, therefore, they looked at sending their children to a low-fee independent school which was a more affordable option. Motala and Dieltiens (2008) maintain that there were conflicting opinions amongst members of the public concerning equal access to education for everyone. Hence, independent schools with low fees were created that predominantly serve families that are on, or below, the poverty line (Languille, 2016). In terms of South Africa's current educational conditions, low-fee independent schools are a driving force of social mobility (Languille, 2016). As a developing country, low-fee independent schooling is growing rapidly and creating a fundamental change in the South African landscape and in society (Machard & McKay, 2015). This change is closing the gap between public and

private schools - which is consolidated by social position in the economy (Languille, 2016).

Differentiated education allows independent schools to provide quality education to communities that are further down the socio-economic ladder. In the context of poverty, low-fee independent schools were created for low socio-economic communities which ensured equal access to education for everyone (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008). There were two main determining factors which led parents to choose low-fee independent schools: the affordability of the fees set by the schools and the educational conditions of public schools (Languille, 2106).

Although the demand for education excess gap was being filled by independent providers, there was still a vacuum between the socio-economic classes (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008). It seems that parents would rather send their children to an independent school, based on the notion that independent schools offer better quality education. They send their children to low-fee independent schools which put the learners in a specific class as they come from similar socio-economic backgrounds (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Research claims that even as poor parents' educational choices were shaped by poverty and social status, so it was enhanced by independent schooling. The social category of the African middle-class stimulated the growing interest of private investors (Languille, 2016). Motala and Dieltiens (2008) believe that due to the growth of independent schools they were no longer seen as elitist and attracted communities from across socio-economic classes and race groups. It is, therefore, maintained that independent schools have filled the gaps left by the state that has failed to redistribute educational facilities and resources equally (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008).

2.5   ROLES OF PARENTS

Parents have the best interests of their children at heart; they nurture their children by providing them with skills and knowledge until the age of 5 or 6. Thereafter, the responsibility of educating them is assumed to lie in the hands of

teachers and schools (Lemmer, 2007). However, there is a need for parents to continue their involvement in their children's education so that schools are able to learn about the surrounding communities and more specifically, the communities from which the parents of the learners come in order to provide effective support for both the parents and the teachers (Smit & Liebenberg, 2003).

Bertrand and Deslandes (2005) believe that parents should be made aware of what is expected of them; their duties, roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined to stimulate accountability within management teams. In order for effective decision-making to take place, a good ethical environment is required which helps to determine the behaviour of all stakeholders, including learners, teachers, and parents. (Peled & Rosenblatt, 2002). Therefore, parents who make a commitment in terms of contributing to the management of schools have a greater effect on improving the quality of teaching and on the availability of resources. An example of their commitment may be in something as simple as raising funds or assisting with extra-curricular activities (Koross, *et al.,* 2009).

2.6   INFLUENCES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Research indicates that parental participation is an input that should be seen as one that improves the efficiency of a school and could equally be applied in low-fee independent schools (Bauch, 1988; Porter, 2011). Parents' participation and involvement, decision-making and communication in schools contribute greatly to their success (Bauch, 1988; Chisley, 2014). It had been established that positive change occurs in schools when there is mutual support and cooperation between parents and teachers (Lemmer, 2007).

Parental involvement is considered to be directly proportional to the parents/families' socio-economic level. For example, Anderson and Minke (2007) are of the opinion that families with fewer resources react differently in terms of parental involvement than parents with more resources. Parents from low socio-economic backgrounds often do not feel welcome when they are involved in school matters; hence, their reluctance to be involved (Porter, 2011). However, it

is important to have the cooperation of all parents, particularly parents who are hard to reach (Lemmer, 2007). Parents from good socio-economic backgrounds tend to be more involved in their children's academic life because of the easily accessible resource contributions they are able to make to schools (Peled & Rosenblatt, 2002). Ndebele (2015) recommends that parents from poor socio-economic backgrounds should be encouraged to be more involved in their children's school work which could be done in simple ways, such as checking and supervising homework.

Another factor that influences parental involvement is the parents' previous school achievement. This implies that parents' academic successes determine their level of interest in that of their children's (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

In low-fee independent schools, consistent parental involvement is necessary to ensure that challenges are overcome, and that there is a constant improvement in the social climate of the school (Bauch, 1988; Porter, 2011). Effective parental involvement results in a common understanding between parents and schools of the goals, morals and values that families and schools share and possess (Bauch, 1988; Porter, 2011).

To ensure the better functioning of schools, it is important to listen to parents; to encourage their participation; and to give them more responsibility. Greater parental involvement engenders greater appreciation from the schools and from their children when they perform their roles as parents. Schools cannot take full responsibility for learners' education; for schools to run effectively, parents must assume responsibility, both directly and indirectly (Mncube, Harber & du Plessis, 2011).

2.7   MANAGING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Managing parental involvement refers to guiding parents in their involvement in the school so that it functions effectively. According to the literature, listening to parents, encouraging their participation and giving them responsibility make them more accountable and it empowers them to assist in facilitating improvement in

the school (Mncube, Harber & du Plesses, 2011). Throughout the post-apartheid period in South Africa ensuring that respect was equal and equitable was deemed important in disseminating and valuing knowledge and opinions; it created a strong sense of collaboration in school decision-making (Mncube, Harber & du Plessis, 2011).

Good communication is a key factor that guarantees consistent parental involvement in schools (Halsey, 2005). Halsey (2005) makes three recommendations on how to improve communication which is important if stakeholders are to sustain parental involvement in the effective management of schools:

- There should be better communication between teachers which should motivate them to develop plans for communicating with parents.
- Teachers should have greater access to resources, such as parents' contact numbers.
- In terms of modern life in a globalized economy, technology should be used to communicate with stakeholders, especially parents (Halsey, 2005).

The implementation of these three recommendations should encourage more parents' involvement in their children's educational lives and, as a result, there should be fewer learner drop-outs from schools; greater retention should occur; and there should be more special education placements (Anderson & Minke, 2007). These outcomes should further encourage parental involvement and enhance the management teams of schools.

Good communication between parents and teachers results in parents being empowered and more motivated to become involved in their children's education (Griffith, 1998; Chisley, 2014). According to existing research, where parental involvement is low, it has been found that a high percentage of learners come from low socio-economic homes and live in poverty (Griffith 1998; Porter, 2011)

and because, in many cases, both parents work full-time or have more than one job they pay less attention to their children (Becker & Epstein, 1981).

It has also been shown that parents who attended schools where they received a good quality of education communicate more frequently with teachers as they want what is best for their children. Similarly, parents who attended university seem to be more likely interested in their children's education (Abadzi, 2014). However, parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are usually illiterate and depend solely on teachers to educate their children (Abadzi, 2014).

Because of a lack of communication between teachers and parents in facilitating family education activities and community involvement, there is a call for leadership to sustain teacher and parent interaction and organisation. This is important in creating teamwork and collaboration between parents, communities and other stakeholders who are interested in learner success in schools (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). However, improvement in the quality of education in schools cannot occur unless there is change which is innovative and continuous in creating the school culture with structure, rules and routines (Huber, 2004).

To ensure improved parental involvement, Bauch (1988) recommends that the following should be done to facilitate parental involvement in low or high-fee independent schools:

- Ensure that parents are focused on their children's performance – both academic and developmental. Parents should show concern for, and support, their children in the development processes.
- Promote consistency in parental involvement. No matter what parental involvement is envisaged, it is the parents' responsibility to be active participants in the development of their children.
- Schools should focus on academic activities to improve parental involvement.
- Parents from a poor socio-economic background should be made more aware of the value of parental involvement as a means to raise their

children so that, as adults, they will not struggle to compete in the corporate environment.

This is in comparison to recent research by Okeke (2014), who identified strategies that would help strengthen and ensure effective involvement of parents. These strategies involve:

- Creating a national policy on parental involvement
- Involving parents in curriculum matters
- Hosting parents' evenings
- Creating a school childcare policy for nursing mothers
- Encouraging home visits
- Hosting parent-teacher games' days
- Inviting parents to extra-curricular events
- Creating a parent-teacher association

The comparison of strategies from pre-democracy and post-democracy indicate some similarities; however, recent research stipulates more examples, including documentation/policies, meetings and events.

2.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter involved reviewing the relevant available literature. It has been noted that in terms of globalised education, parental involvement has become a common phenomenon which is used to assist the democratisation and decentralisation of governance in schools. The growth of independent schools and emergence of low–fee independent schools has resulted in a paradigm shift of the economic growth in choice and competition of quality education. The literature also suggests that as the growth of independent schools continues to attract communities from across socio-economic classes, it is important to ensure that the gap left by the state is always filled as this will enhance the effective distribution of resources and encourage collaboration amongst teachers and parents. According to the literature, parents from low socio-economic

backgrounds have a tendency to be less involved than parents from a high socio-economic one.

In a South African context, the literature provided information on parental involvement in the public and independent education sectors. However, there is a lack of research investigating low-fee independent schools and this motivated the researcher to explore the nature and management of parental involvement in one low-fee independent school in South Africa. In support of this exploration, the next chapter, Chapter 3, describes the conceptual framework which was used, namely Joyce Epstein's Typology which analyzes six types of parental involvement within a school setting.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The investigation of the nature and management of parental involvement in one low-fee independent school in South Africa in this study was framed by Joyce Epstein's six types of parental involvement developed in 1988 and extended in 1991. The typology is concrete and generates approaches on how to increase parental involvement in various ways based on the six types of parental involvement: basic obligations of parents; basic obligations of schools; parental involvement in schools; parental involvement in learning activities at home; and parental involvement in governance and advocacy; as well as collaboration and exchanges (Epstein, 1988).

Epstein refers to parental involvement as being that of parents and communities which have made a concerted decision to be active in creating a caring educational environment at school and in the home (Omoteso, 2010). The theory suggests how various types of parental involvement affect all aspects of schools, including school programmes; classroom management; teacher effectiveness; student learning and development; parents' awareness of their responsibilities and contributions to their children's education; and the social and personal development of children over the period of their academic years (Epstein, 1988).

3.2. BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS

The first type of parental involvement identified by Epstein is the basic obligations of parents which refer to their duties and responsibilities to their children. The primary concern within this type of involvement is the creation of positive home conditions – including good health and safety, good parenting skills, and good support for the children (Epstein, 1988; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Parents are often unable to accept that they are also educators and that the initial training

and education received by children emanates from them which lays a significant foundation for further growth (Omoteso, 2010).

3.3. BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF SCHOOLS

The second type of parental involvement relates to the basic obligations for which schools are responsible. Information concerning learners, such as academic progress and school programmes, should be communicated to their parents. Communication may be conveyed in various forms, including telephonically, electronically and through meetings as well as any other means. An important aspect to consider when communicating with parents is that they understand the information; some parents have had a less formal education than others (Epstein, 1988; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1996). Lemmer and Meier (2015) suggest that in order to promote effective communication, schools should design and implement a variety of strategies for parents and schools to communicate with one another. They believe that teachers often come across as superior in terms of their professional status and this makes parents feel inadequate when they are involved in school activities; the relationship should be more equal.

3.4. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

The third type of involvement explains how parental involvement makes an impact on the school and the learners. Many parents do not have the skills and training to be involved in their children's schooling and, therefore, they decide to opt out and not to be a part of it. However, it is important that parents should be encouraged to participate in social and academic events of the school (Omoteso, 2010); they should be encouraged to assist with school functions, administration and even in the classrooms (Epstein, 1988). It is thought that children will take their education more seriously when they observe their parents' commitment (Omoteso, 2010).

3.5.   PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

The fourth type of parental involvement relates to how parents participate in learning activities at home. Parents often do not have sufficient knowledge about how to support their children at home. They should, therefore, be guided by the teachers on how to academically help their children at home (Omoteso, 2010). Teachers may assist parents in terms of skills and activities that need to be taught to their children. In doing so, parents become more knowledgeable about decisions that are taken in the development of school programmes (Epstein, 1988; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1996).

3.6.   PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY

The fifth type of parental involvement refers to the participation in decisions made by Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA). Parents' input in decisions that are made positively affects the quality of education offered by schools which, in turn, contributes to the schools' greater efficiency and effectiveness (Epstein, 1988; Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

3.7.   COLLABORATION AND EXCHANGES

The sixth type of parental involvement is that of the community. The acquisition of resources should be coordinated with businesses, organisations, universities and the wider community in order to strengthen school programmes and governance, thereby making an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of schools (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1996). This also encourages better preparation for future teachers and administrators (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

3.8.   CONCLUSION

It is evident from Epstein's typology that parental and community involvement serves various purposes in the overall functioning of schools and education. Epstein strongly believes that schools should improve in various areas of parent/community involvement (Epstein, 1988). While most parents are unaware of how to productively contribute to schools' effectiveness, programmes and

relationships could be developed to assist in increasing their involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Epstein's typology was selected by the researcher to explore the nature and management of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa because it suggests important ways in which parents can be involved in their children's education and in the affairs of the schools. The typology was deemed particularly essential for this study because it assisted the researcher in identifying types of parental involvement that both exist and do not exist in the independent secondary school selected for the study. This enabled her to address the main research question which seeks to understand the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa, and how it is managed in the school.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, describes the methodology used in the study to explore the nature and management of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the selection of the methodology which was used to explore the nature and management of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa is described and justified. The study was guided by the following research questions:

4.1.1. What is the nature of parental involvement at the selected low-fee independent secondary school?

4.1.2. What factors facilitate parental involvement at the selected low-fee independent secondary school?

4.1.3. What factors hinder parental involvement at the selected low-fee independent secondary school?

4.1.4. How is parental involvement managed in the selected school?

The chapter sets out factors that were considerations for the sampling model and research setting as well as participant selection and document sampling. The data collection tools and the data analysis methods are described and justified, followed by comments on trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

4.2. RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

From an epistemological point of view, qualitative researchers explore assumptions, interaction, attitudes, beliefs and views of people by examining human events from a holistic perspective and they analyse collected data to determine how people create meaning of phenomena within specific contexts (Maree, 2007). In this study, the collected data was, predominantly, descriptive which was useful in terms of an interpretative research paradigm. The researcher was able to view and understand the phenomenon which was reflected from the participants´ perspectives (Schulze & Kamper, 2012).

A qualitative case study design was chosen for the purpose of exploring and investigating the research questions; the intention was to elaborate on perceptions pertaining to parental involvement. A case study involves multiple sources of data found within a specific setting. It examines a case in depth over a period of time, but within a boundary (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In this study the researcher chose to gather data using a variety of data collection methods that included interviews, observation and document analysis. The case study was of limited scope and, therefore, a finite number of participants were selected and a limited number of observations took place.

The research focused on the perceptions of participants who were drawn from one secondary school concerning parental involvement as well as their experiences of parent-teacher interaction; they included teachers, parents, the principal and the secretary. The data was collected during interviews, observation and document analysis.

The key strengths of a case study are embedded in the multiple sources and techniques used in the data gathering process; it analyses a phenomenon by exploring all the collected data and by answering 'how' and 'why' questions (Maree, 2007). However, a disadvantage pertaining to case studies is related to time management where the design may consume time due to its use of many data collection methods (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). A further disadvantage is determining trustworthiness as there is no right answer. In terms of the collected data, all answers are based on perceptions and feelings about the phenomenon. Also, by selecting a case study approach only a small sample is used which means that it cannot be generalised to a larger population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

4.3.   RESEARCH SETTING

The independent school that was selected for the study is located in Pretoria, in Gauteng, South Africa. It is part of a South African educational company that focuses on operating preschools, primary schools and high schools and which has been listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange since 2011. The company has over 40 campuses that include five school brands and over one hundred individual schools. The owner of the company - one of the ten members who serve on a board of directors - founded the company in 1998. The school started in a church as a school consisting of 28 learners.

The specific campus which was chosen for this study is situated on a site that accommodates learners from Grade RR to Grade 12. The school was previously based in a different location which was also in a semi-urban area. After a change in management and more people investing in the school, it grew in terms of learners and staff members. Currently, the school accommodates a maximum of 35 learners *per* class. It is an English medium co-educational school that uses a cost-sensitive model to ensure lowest possible school fees without compromising academic standards and curriculum.

4.4.   SAMPLING MODEL AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

For this study, purposive sampling was used; participants were selected according to preselected criteria which are relevant to the research topic (Maree, 2007; Burger & Silima, 2006). A limitation of using purposive sampling was in making informed selections that required some knowledge of the population prior to selecting a sample.

In addition to interviewing the principal and the secretary, the researcher approached them to obtain parent and teacher information in order to create her sample. She sampled one teacher *per* grade from Grades 7 to 9 who had taught at the school for at least one year; and one parent *per* grade whose child/children had been at the school for a reasonably long time, preferably for more than 5 years, as she wanted them to speak from their experience of interacting with the

school in the past. This made a total of 8 participants. A list of parents who were both involved and not involved was provided by the principal; three were randomly selected based on the above criteria. They were contacted telephonically and finally selected in terms of their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

The secretary had worked at the school for several years and was able to provide the researcher with a history of the school and describe how the school had developed over the years. The principal was able to provide insight into parental involvement from a managerial perspective; she maintained that her main priority was to ensure that all parties were happy in the schooling's environment.

4.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Three methods were used to gather data for the study, namely: semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis.

4.5.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

The first data collection method was conducted by means of interviews. Data was gathered by conducting open-ended interviews with the selected participants. In the interviews information was obtained through the different perspectives provided by the participants (Maree, 2007). Of the various types of interviews, semi-structured interviews were scheduled which enabled the researcher to identify new emerging facets of the problem that related to parental involvement in the particular school. Open-ended interviews allowed the researcher to study participants' perceptions of the phenomenon being studied rather than structured interviews that do not permit elaboration and clarification. Those who participated in the study were interviewed at the school in their meeting room.

The questions used in the interviews were formulated and compiled beforehand, based on Joyce Epstein's theory; they consisted of both structured and unstructured questions. The technique of probing was frequently used where

further unstructured questions were formulated and asked based on answers provided to the structured questions. This encouraged participants to elaborate more fully on their answers. The following are examples of questions asked and participant responses during the interviews.

> Researcher: *What do you consider your duties and responsibilities to be towards your children?*
>
> P8*: My duties are to make sure that they (*children*) grow up in a healthy environment and they have all the support that they need. My responsibilities – they have to be… their health should be taken care of, all the basic needs, and schooling. The school should not have problems with my children. That should be my responsibility… to teach them the 'rights and wrongs', and discipline also. They should know about life, how to handle life, and how to deal with different situations they faced with.*
>
> Researcher*: (*Follow-up question*) So it's not only academic; you want them (*children*) to grow emotionally and socially as well?*
>
> P8*: Yes, they (*children*) should have a broader perspective of life. Not just one-sided.*
>
> Researcher*: (*Follow-up question*) You mentioned that your duty is to support them (*children*). In what way can you support them?*
>
> P8*: Make sure they (*children*) have everything they need; like, if they need something for school, they should have it. And it should be needs and not wants. And things like, if they're sick, I should be able to take them to the doctor. They should have proper food; and they should be happy, healthy children.*

The interviews were scheduled either during teachers' free time at school or after school hours. Parents were interviewed at a time that best suited them during the school day. Each interview was held for a minimum of one hour; some interviews continued for a maximum 90 minutes.

All interviews were recorded as audio files, and then transcribed into text.

4.5.1.1.   Managing the interviews

As a novice in qualitative studies, the researcher encountered some challenges while conducting the interviews; for instance, certain open-ended questions created confusion in the participants' minds and she often had to redirect participants after they misinterpreted questions or merely provided answers that were not related to the topic.

The researcher realised that it was her responsibility to create mutual understanding and trust. Therefore, the dialogue between herself and the interviewees consisted of introducing herself as the researcher; relating the purpose of research; explaining the consent form and the issue of anonymity; and, lastly, outlining the method that would be used to collect data which was followed by the interview questions.

When it seemed that the participants did not understand the questions, the researcher rephrased them and explained them by providing hypothetical examples. Peens and Strydom (2007) maintain that it is vital that there should be sufficient contact between researchers and participants to ensure mutual commitment and understanding. Rodgers (2010) believes that communication and problem-solving is much easier to deal with when there is trust in relationships which is the basis for responsibility, fairness, accountability and transparency as well as a prerequisite for information exchange (Rodgers, 2010).

4.5.2. Observations

The second data collection method used was observation which is a useful data gathering strategy in qualitative studies as it is a process of recording the behavioural patterns and ideas of the participants (Maree, 2007). The researcher used a complete observer approach whereby she played the role of an outsider. She had envisioned observing parent-teacher interaction in approximately three parent meetings to explore the parents' commitment to their children's education as well as how they interacted with teachers; however, due to the limited number of meetings held during the research period, she was only able to attend one. In

recording the observation, a useful tool was a pre-developed observation schedule to categorise behaviour at a specific event/time (Maree, 2007). Epstein's typology was used to develop the items/categories to be observed.

4.5.2.1. Managing the observation

Despite the intent on observing parent meetings, the researcher was informed that the school had only one teacher-parent meeting which was held at the beginning of every term to discuss report cards. Fortunately, she was conducting her research when this meeting was held. Very few parents, approximately 30 out of 400 parents, and 12 teachers attended the meeting which lasted for 2 hours. However, the data which was gathered did add to the research findings.

4.5.3. Document Analysis

The third method of data collection was document analysis. Documents refer to public records, personal documents, visual documents and artifacts (Burger & Silima, 2006). Documentary analysis had the potential to provide an understanding of the messages communicated to parents and teachers by the school, which, supported and strengthened the research.

The following is a list of the documents included in the document analysis:
- June Examination Booklet (Grades 7 - 12)
- Official Letter: Slipper Day
- Email: Photo Day
- Email: Email A (Absence)
- Email: Email B (Grade 12)
- Email: Request for a meeting

4.5.3.1. Managing the document analysis

Like all qualitative research, documents are credible representations as they are subjective to what the authors may have experienced. The researcher was able to interpret documents in terms of her knowledge and understanding of them.

4.6. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is an ongoing and iterative process whereby data collection, processing, analysing and reporting are intertwined (Maree, 2007). Data was analysed using thematic analysis which identifies, analyses, organizes, describes, and reports themes found in the data. It also summarises key features found in the data and allows for a clear and organized final report (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). As the data was collected through various means, it added to the credibility of triangulation based on multiple data sources for the concept being researched (White & Marsh, 2006).

After collecting the data, the researcher started analysing the data by first listening to the voice recordings of all the interviews and then transcribing them *verbatim*. Thereafter, the scripts were carefully scrutinized; the researcher read through them several times to gain a deeper understanding of the answers which had been provided. This assisted her in organizing and coding the data from the interviews that were based on the research questions and conceptual framework which underpinned the study. Codes such as communication, support, homework, e-mails, progress, encouragement, activities, interest and schoolwork emerged from the data. The process was repeated a number of times to ensure that the relevant information was identified and organized in common themes. In addition, notes from the observation and documents were collated and together with the data gathered in interviews analysed.

4.7. LIMITATIONS

The findings of this research were limited in terms of the small number of participants; firstly, it was a qualitative study which is not interested in numbers; and, secondly, the researcher did not manage to involve many participants because of certain challenges. After identifying and selecting parents as participants, the parents were contacted but not all of them were willing to participate; they were not interested or did not have the time to be interviewed. The parents who were available and participated in this study were those who invested in, and were involved in, the school. Due to the limited sample size, the

data gathered does not represent a whole population and may, therefore, not be generalised.

4.8. CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In this research it was intended that the interviews, observation and document analysis would be used as methods of data collection to add to the trustworthiness of the study in encompassing credible, applicable, dependable and confirmable data (Maree, 2007). An important factor which was considered throughout the research was ensuring that the research accurately described what it was intended to describe. Essentially, a qualitative research design is based on the fact that researchers assume that their questions will be answered truthfully - thus guaranteeing the validity of the research (Schurink, 2009). To increase the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher introduced herself to the participants and she clarified the nature of the research for the participants; reassured them of their anonymity and confidentiality; voice-recorded all interviews; transcribed the data *verbatim* by listening to the voice recordings several times; compared data with evidence from the analysis of different sources of data collection; confirmed the findings/results with participants; and kept detailed and accurate notes throughout all the various processes.

The comparison of multiple sources of data collection, such as interviews, observation and document analysis is referred to as triangulation. This is used to offset the weakness of one method with others, leading to more credible and comprehensive data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014); the credibility of findings becomes greater when all the sources converge and suggest the same results. In this study it not only resulted in more complete findings, but the data was considered to be more valid.

4.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To conduct research in an ethical manner means to demonstrate particular traits, such as values, morals and civility in obtaining information for the purpose of the study (Hester & Lillian, 2010). The various ethical requirements are: firstly,

underpinning the importance of pursuing the truth based on evidence; secondly, obtaining consent from those who are to be involved in the research; and, thirdly, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of those participating in the study (Pring, 2005).

The researcher could only proceed with the study once informed consent had been received from the teachers, parents and other relevant stakeholders who would be involved in the study (Peens & Strydom, 2007). Prior to the commencement of the interviews, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and its potential benefits. In order to gain access to the school where it was intended to conduct the research, the principal was approached to ask for permission to do so. The researcher briefly explained the nature and purpose of the study as well as the processes to be followed in conducting the study. After obtaining the principal's consent, she requested the principal to assist her to identify three parents and three teachers - one from each grade, as indicated above.

The participants were assured that their confidentiality as well as that of the school would be protected. Consent form letters were compiled and issued by the researcher and signed by the relevant participants. It was guaranteed that all data collected would be anonymous and would be securely stored and that only the researcher would have access to it. Personal identities would always be kept confidential by referring to participants in the report by pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. As participation in this study was voluntary, participants were informed that they could withdraw from it at any time, and that there would be no negative consequences.

4.10. CONCLUSION

The methodology assisted the researcher to explore the research questions in terms of a qualitative case study by focusing on data collection by means of interviews, observation and document analysis. The research questions provided the framework for this study and were useful in the analysis of data. All data

collection methods have limitations; however, the analysis of data gathered in this research contributed to the effective use of the case study. The ethical considerations and limitations have also been highlighted in this chapter.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, presents the data that was collected in the field.

CHAPTER 5

DATA REPRESENTATION

5.1.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews conducted with teachers, parents, a principal and a secretary as well as those from an observation of a parent-teacher meeting to assess the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa and how it is managed in the school.

5.2.   BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

To enhance an understanding of the findings, the following background is given concerning the individual participants who have all been associated with education and the school for many years.

- The principal has worked at the school for over two years. Prior to this, she was a principal on another campus of the same school brand for over fifteen years.

- The secretary has worked at the school for over five years. Her role is, mainly attending to parents *via* phone calls, e-mails and in person visits. She ensures that she is constantly aware of changes in and around the school to keep parents and the community well informed.

- The three teachers interviewed in this study have worked at the school for over five years - except one teacher who, at the time of the interviews, had only been working at the school for one year. Her prior work experience involved administration in a public school. The other two teachers teach different subjects such as Economics and Management Science, Business Studies and Accounting; English and Mathematics.

- The three parents interviewed have completed matric and have a further tertiary education qualification. Parent 1 (P7) is a married mother with 1 child at the school; Parent 2 (P8) is a mother of 2 children who both attend

this school; and Parent 3 (P9) is a father of 3 children - 2 of his children attend this school. All parents interviewed are from average socio-economic backgrounds.

For the purpose of this study, the following codes were used to represent the participants: T7 refers to a Grade 7 Teacher; T8 refers to a Grade 8 Teacher; and T9 refers to a Grade 9 Teacher. As for the parents, P7 refers to a Grade 7 parent; P8 refers to a Grade 8 parent; and P9 refers to a Grade 9 parent.

5.3. FINDINGS

The findings emanated from the data analysis conducted in terms of the following six sub-sections of Joyce Epstein's theory (1988): Basic Obligations of Parents; Basic Obligations of School; Parental Involvement in School; Parental Involvement in Learning Activities at Home; Parental Involvement in Governance and Advocacy; and Collaboration and Exchanges.

5.3.1. Basic Obligations of Parents

This type of parental involvement refers to the duties and responsibilities of parents to their children which underpins the fact that parents are also educators.

On the subject of the roles and responsibilities of parents, participants held similar views which conveyed an understanding that parents play an important role in the raising of their children, especially in terms of schooling.

The three teacher participants believed that parents are obliged to guiding and monitoring their children regarding their choices and actions, particularly related to what is expected of them at school; assisting them in making subject choices and how to prepare for those subjects; and monitoring their academic progress. They were also of the opinion that education does not necessarily start at school but in the home.

The teacher participants suggested that not all parents teach their children morals and values at home which require the teachers to educate learners about morals, values, standards and steps in setting goals. The one participant

believed that parents should sit down with their children and give them guidance so that teachers do not have to start from the very beginning, but rather reinforce and build on a foundation that has already been laid by the parents. One participant commented:

> "*Because I feel they* (learners) *are just sent to school and teachers are just supposed to take over. But the learners do not even know why they are sent to school.*"
> Participant T8

The teachers maintained that they could predict the influence that parents had on their children when the learners´ attitudes and behaviours in class reflected a lacked understanding of the value of education. The teachers felt frustrated because it seemed that the parents were putting the entire burden of enforcing discipline and educating the children on them; there appeared to be no support from the parents. According to Participant P9,

> "*Parents play a major role in educating their children because they are the ones who guide them from the time they were born. A child is ´supposed´ to learn discipline at home. All the mannerisms they display outside their home is a reflection of their parents´ upbringing. If a child is not used to being reprimanded for doing wrong then that child will not take kindly to being reprimanded at school or anywhere else.*"
> Participant T9

During the observation of the report meeting, the researcher sensed that the majority of parents that were present were not interested in their children's homework and school work and that they were not involved in their children's education. The teachers also maintained that learner success depends on the continuity between the involvement of parents in the home and at school. It was noted that teachers cited an improvement in learner behaviour and academic development when there was parent-teacher interaction. One teacher said:

> "*But if the parents would help at home, you see both of them* (parents and the children) *playing their roles...at the end of the day there´s continuity.*"
> Participant T8

The teachers held the view that when parents did not interact and follow up with their children after a school day, what the learners had learned on one day would not be retained until the next day, as there was no reinforcement at home; teachers would have to start from the beginning again.

However, participants agreed that parents' input did not always, necessarily, need to relate directly to the curriculum; the teachers felt that some parents played a different role in the education of their children, such in teaching them how to link spending money to concepts they learned in Accounting. In this sense, parents indirectly provide practical experience to the theoretical learning.

> "*If they* (parents) *give support, it really changes their* (learners) *results. If they* (learners) *hear things in another light from someone like their parents, it actually improves their results at school.*"
> Participant T8

Data gathered in the interviews with parents had one common thread which was that their basic obligation to their children was to provide them with the basic necessities of life, including food, shelter, love, a physically and emotionally healthy environment and a good education. Furthermore, they indicated that instilling spiritual well-being was essential as this teaches children morals, values and the difference between right and wrong as well as good discipline. One parent elaborated by suggesting that basic necessities should be a priority. The parent believed that: firstly, it was his duty to ensure that his children were at school and, therefore, he needed to be financially stable; secondly, he needed to ensure that the school he chose would provide him with the service he expected for his children's education; thirdly, it was his responsibility to interact with the teachers and the school to enhance the value of education being provided for his children; and fourthly, it was his duty to continue schooling his children at home.

He added that once parents had made the right choices for their children, the school could take over - as long as there was consistent communication between the school and the home. He concluded his comments with the following:

> "*My inputs in terms of my time and money; the school's input into my child's education; and my involvement in interfacing the two - the teacher and child does not end here. In my opinion, it continues at home.*"
> Participant P9

The parents also believed that they play a role in educating their children and that they may take an active role in teaching. For example, one parent stated that she reinforces what her children are taught at school by communicating with her children on a daily basis; she assists them with their homework, and reinforces the same values which were taught at school. Another parent also maintained that she is involved in her children's homework and school activities and assists and guides them when required to do so. However, according to one parent, his role was different from the role of the school. His view was that his most important role was to guide his children in setting goals; assist them to reach those goals; reward them when they achieved those goals; and ensure that he has considered his children's strengths and interests. His response included the following:

> "*We need to teach them short term goals at an early age - goals that can motivate you to be achieved and set higher goals. However, if you set too large goals, from a very low base, you are running a risk of not attaining them and disappointing the child, and breaking their moral.*"
> Participant P9

In agreement with the above responses, the principal and secretary who took part in the study were of the opinion that the main duties and responsibilities of parents are to care for, and show an interest in, their children in terms of their schoolwork. They also believed that parents definitely play a role in educating their children because values and morals are primarily instilled at home.

However, from an administrative point of view, the secretary believed that the majority of parents do not play their roles in terms of communication with the school; they are not 'reachable'. She said:

> "*I can't contact with a parent because they are not reachable. They do not reply to their emails, they do not answer their phones; I will send a letter home, but the parent will not send it back. Then it becomes my responsibility to follow up. And then it becomes my problem, as it's not just one parent - it's a few.*"
> Secretary

The findings suggest that there was consensus among parents, teachers, the principal and the secretary that the basic obligations of parents are to create a positive home environment; instill good discipline in their children; teach them morals and values; provide them with basic necessities, such as food and shelter; and monitor their children so that they can grow holistically. The teachers, however, believed that parents often neglect their role and seem to put the burden of discipline and education solely on the teachers.

5.3.2. Basic Obligations of Schools

This type of parental involvement refers to the duties and responsibilities of the school to parents. It focuses, predominantly, on communication between the school, the teachers and the parents.

In interviewing the participants on the roles and responsibilities of the school, it became apparent that there was a gap in communication between the school and the parents.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher differentiated between information and communication as two different concepts. Communication is seen as the process of transferring and producing information between a sender and receiver while information refers to news or facts about something more explicitly - knowledge. This information process involves both formal and informal

communication where the information conveyed can be analysed, as well as the process whereby it is carried out (Losee, 1999).

The data collected from interviews with the teachers indicated that information, such as the academic progress of learners and the school programme, was formally communicated to parents by means of reports, parent-teacher meetings and newsletters. Reports are issued once a term at the parent-teacher meetings where the academic progress and the behaviour of learners are discussed with the individual parents. Newsletters are used for school-related topics, such as events and other announcements. Some teachers felt that the forms of communication were not effective and sufficient; for example, learners received a hard copy of the newsletter, but the documents did not always reach home as some learners left them at school. E-mails were also deemed to be ineffective as many parents may not have had access to e-mails or did not check them on a regular basis. Therefore, it emerged from their responses that teachers prefer to communicate telephonically as this mode of communication is direct and immediate; this type of communication has changed with the advent of smart phones. One teacher believed that there are different 'categories' of parents, based on their socio-economic background. It seems that based on their backgrounds, parents may only have access to certain technological devices - some prefer phone calls and SMSs that reach the receiver directly and immediately, while others prefer e-mails and newsletters that indirectly reach the receivers at a time convenient to them. The following are comments from participants' response:

> "*SMSs and telephone calls are more effective than newsletters which are lengthy and detailed. Some parents don't like reading. However, when it is an SMS, it's quick to read and to the point.*"
> Participant T9

"*I would advise the best communication is telephonically. Maybe we send an SMS because what we've discovered with emails, most parents do not read emails frequently from schools. They only read once and sometimes, they are trying to catch up* (with the emails)*, and the date has passed. So I think SMSs are effective too.*"
Participant T8.

The documents used for the purpose of this study were forms of communication which shed some light on the phenomenon being studied, i.e., parental involvement in the selected school. The documents highlighted the methods and forms of communication which exist between parents, teachers and the school. The documents that were analysed in this study are from primary sources.

5.3.2.1.   June Examination Booklet

The June Examination Booklet was sent out to all Grades 7 -12 parents two weeks prior the commencement of the June examinations. This document informed parents about various examination-related information, such as important dates; rules pertaining to the examination process; consequences of late arrival or absenteeism; dress code; rules regarding the possession of personal items, such as cell phones during the examination; responsibilities of learners during the examination; and rules pertaining to stationery. The last two pages of the document contained the examination timetable which provided the following information: date, day, session, and the grade in which the relevant subject was being written.

The booklet was e-mailed to parents to keep them informed of the school rules and procedures regarding June examinations. It allowed parents the opportunity to discuss the document with their children in preparing them for a successful examination. The document also served as evidence that all interested parties had been informed of the examination rules and regulations; in the event of a learner disobeying the rules or procedures, that they would be held accountable

for their actions; and that the parents had been informed of the consequences of any transgressions.

5.3.2.2.   Slipper Day Newsletter

The Slipper Day Newsletter that informed parents of a Charity Drive in which the school participated was e-mailed to them. The letter was short, friendly and informative, explaining the initiative behind Slipper Day. It provided details, including the cost, date, where to go and a background to the Charity which was being supported.

The letter was professional in that it was typed on the school's letterhead, signed by the principal and contained the school's contact details.

5.3.2.3.   E-mails

The following e-mails were sent by the principal of the school and represent communication from and between parents and teachers and/or the school. The e-mails were within a date range of 1 month. The names in the e-mails are referred to as pseudonyms in this study, to ensure confidentiality.

- **Photo Day**: An e-mail was sent out a day prior to class photographs being taken at the school. Parents were informed in the e-mail that school photographs would be taken the next day. It also provided details about learner attire and decorum.
- **Email A**: This email was sent by the HOD of the school to inform a parent that their child had not come to school on that day. This email served to show the parent that the school was concerned about the learner's absence and that they required a reason for the absence.
- **Email B**: A learner's parents had contacted the receptionist of the school to make an appointment with the learner's teachers. The receptionist was unable to provide a date and time immediately. Thereafter, the receptionist e-mailed the HOD to make arrangements for a meeting to be held with the respective teachers.

- **Request for a Meeting**: One morning, at the beginning of a school day, a parent had e-mailed requesting for a meeting with a teacher. Unfortunately, her e-mail was unattended to which resulted in the parent following-up with an e-mail in the evening. The following day, the receptionist attended to the email by forwarding it to the HOD at the beginning of the school day.

All e-mails were sent in a professional manner and the contact details of the relevant staff member was supplied when e-mails were sent. These selected e-mails show how the HOD communicated with the parents and how parents engaged with the school in attempting to arrange meetings with respective teacher/s.

With regard to the question concerning whether the interaction between parents and teachers was viewed as equal, teachers responses were that parents did not contribute as much as teachers did, concluding that the relationships between parents and teachers were not as effective as expected as their roles were not clear. This state of affairs disappointed the teachers as it made it appear that they were failing in their duty to develop the learner, but, in fact, they were just not receiving the support of the parents. One teacher stated that there was a policy of open communication, but the parents did not seem to be as committed as the teachers expected them to be. Participant T9 reinforced this perception in the following statement:

> "*I continuously email parents to make them realize the risk factor… of their child failing, or dropping in grades, or behaviour, or friends, or… whatever affects the learner. But there's generally empty promises received from parents.*"
> Participant T9

The interviewed parents felt that the academic progress of their children and updates on school programmes were not well communicated; communication related to academic progress and consisted of report cards and parent meetings

which were held and hosted at the beginning of each term and information relevant to school programmes was communicated *via* newsletter and e-mails – but only when there was need to do so. One parent maintained that communication could be improved:

> "*I think it boils down to communication - how they communicate on-academic things, non-student/learner progress related matters, how soon they communicate, how they communicate, and the frequency and time of communication.*"
> Participant P9

Another parent added that information was not communicated in time, resulting in inconsistencies that made her feel despondent. She admitted to having no invested interest in the school as she did not feel that the school was interested enough in the parents. She said:

> "*I feel that the school can do more to communicate things, like if they see a child struggling in class then they shouldn't wait till parents day to tell you that; they should be able to have that communication line between the teacher and parents, or the school and parent.*"
> Participant P8

Parents felt unappreciated by teachers and the school; however, by attending meetings and being involved in school events, they felt more valued as their involvement in the school was noticed by the academic staff over a period of time. One parent believed that it was his duty to build a relationship with the school and the teachers to ensure that his opinion was heard; this made him feel that his input was appreciated. However, yet another parent felt that the school was not doing enough to communicate directly with specific parents about their children and this resulted in her feeling dissatisfied with the support provided by teachers and the school.

"It makes me feel despondent. Because I want to be involved in my children's progress, I want to know everything about them. If there's a problem, they (teachers) *should tell me."*
Participant P8

The principal and the secretary felt that despite their efforts to communicate, parents were not sufficiently involved in the communication process. Their perception was that parents needed to make an effort to meet them halfway. The secretary believed that as times are changing, so the school is becoming more technologically and electronically driven; management looks at more cost-effective means of communication, such as social media, rather than SMSs. However, she admitted that the school was advancing at a different technological pace when compared with the parents of the learners. She maintained:

"I think parents should be reachable. That's the biggest problem. You can't contact a parent because they are not reachable; they don't reply to their emails and they don't answer their phones."
Secretary

Another parent felt that apart from the general parents' meetings that took place once a term, the school should host critical subject-related meetings where parents receive specific details about learner performance and content matter related to the relevant subjects in which their children are involved. During the parents' meetings which take place once a term, the primary focus is on general academic matters and the wellbeing of the learners. The parents are of the opinion that insufficient time is devoted to detailed discussions between parents and teachers and, therefore, they have called for more relevant personalised meetings. Participant P7 supported this demand by saying:

"I want, apart from the general parent meetings, I really want a critical subject based meeting. There are certain subjects for me I think are important, so I would want a subject orientated meeting."
Participant P7

The principal maintained that it was the parents' duty to attend school meetings and make an effort to read their e-mails and respond accordingly. She also cited one important aspect of communication at the school which was its *open-door policy;* parents were more than welcome to walk into a classroom at any time to observe what happened in the school. The principal stated that she viewed the commitment of teachers to be far higher than that of the parents; she was saddened to see how children were neglected at home in terms of education. She expressed this in the following way:

> "*In some households where the parents are not really connected with their children, the child is neglected, or the parents are not interested, they not really caring. Then the teachers have to put in double.*"
> Principal

The researcher observed a Parent-Teacher Meeting - also known as a Report Card Meeting - that took place in the common hall of the school where all Grades 7 – 11 subject teachers sat at separate tables. Each of the teachers had either a laptop, books/notes or report cards which they used as references when talking to parents about specific learners' academic results, behaviour or other matters that were addressed. This meeting was held after school hours from 14h00 to 16h30, to accommodate working parents and to avoid interrupting teaching/learning time.

The observation showed that most parents only started arriving from 15h00. They first collected their children's report cards from the class teachers and then they met with specific subject teachers to discuss their concerns or share ideas related to the interests of the learners. However, it seemed that if the class teachers were able to provide sufficient information, parents were satisfied and left without meeting other teachers to have further discussions about their children.

All the teachers seemed willing to assist parents with regards to academic matters and the social behaviour of their children. In the one specific observed meeting the Grade 9 teacher informed a parent of a learner's poor behaviour in class and how this had an impact on her academic progress. The teacher then listened to the parent's response regarding the learner's background and the difficulties with which the learner struggled. The teacher then suggested possible potential solutions to assist the learner in understanding how behaviour had an impact on her work. The researcher was fortunate to observe this learner in class a week later; after observing her, the researcher informally consulted with the teacher whose response was positive. It indicated that the discussion she had previously had with the learner's parent had made a difference; the learner was less disruptive and more engaged in the content of her lessons.

In observing other interactions in the report card meeting, it was noticed that parents sat with teachers for 5 to 10 minutes each. The teachers did not, necessarily, provide resources, such as books, activities and worksheets, etc. for parents; but they did advise them on where to obtain resources and who to speak to in order to obtain more information. The researcher concluded that all the teachers were willing to assist, where needed.

Of the parents who were present, the majority showed an interest in the school and their children's education and they asked questions pertaining to improving their children's marks. However, during the time of the observation, it was observed that 7 parents only intended to collect report cards; they did not meet with any teacher to have some further discussion. This disappointed the teachers who tried to engage in conversation with those parents, but they were brusquely brushed aside.

This observation was one of the four annual teacher-parent meetings. Teachers appeared to be happy to have discussions with the parents, especially those they knew from previous meetings or when they could see that the parents were interested in their children and in the school. Most parents who attended seemed

to care about their children's education and the school; however, the researcher learned that it was also the first time many of them had met with the respective teachers, considering that the meeting was held at the beginning of Term 3.

The findings of the study indicate that the duties and responsibilities of the school to parents focus on communication. The school, primarily, emphasizes formal communication, such as e-mails and newsletters. However, it seems that parents prefer phone calls or SMSs which are more direct. All stakeholders involved in this study suggested that the levels and manner of communication was insufficient and ineffective that made both teachers and parents feel despondent and disappointed. The challenge, therefore, is to close the gap in communication between teachers, parents and the school to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the expectations in terms of their roles.

5.3.3. Parental Involvement at School

This type of involvement refers to the impact parents have on the school. It elaborates on when and how parents should become involved in school events or operations.

Teachers' perceptions are that many parents are not interested or are too busy to participate in school affairs. One teacher stated that it was important to encourage parental participation as it allowed parents to understand the learning environment at school and it encouraged the formation of bonds between learners and parents and the school and parents. When the bonds are created and enhanced, learners acquire confidence and reassurance from teachers and parents as there is a common understanding between both parties involved. However, the teachers believed that regardless of the amount of encouragement they provide, most parents tended to shy away from invitations, and opt out of building a relationship.

In terms of previous experiences, the teachers believed that when parents show their commitment to the school, the learners perform well, both academically and socially. Parents' interest boosts learners' self-esteem when they know that their

parents are at the school for a reason, such as learning about their children's marks and behaviour or just to give general support. One teacher felt that this improved the general conduct of the children and the school. Another teacher maintained that discipline was a key issue at the school and when there was involvement by parents, discipline in the school improved. Participant T8 said:

> "*I believe they behave if they know that their parents are paying attention. Discipline will work much better if the parents are involved.*"
> Participant T8

It is not surprising that the parents who agreed to participate in the interviews were those who participated in academic events that, mostly, involved only collecting report cards and attending parents' meetings. The parents also observed that it was always the same group of parents who were involved and, therefore, they did not have an opportunity to meet different parents. Besides parent meetings, there were other events, such as Career's Day when several universities came to the school to talk about the various degrees and programmes they offered and Entrepreneurs Day when scholars sold items for a profit. All the interviewed parents proudly stated that they attended all events at the school; however, as the school had not yet hosted any social events, they were looking forward to attending those that would still be held. This is evidence in the following extract:

> "*I do participate in academic events. I feel it is important for me to participate in the academic events of my children….. We don't have social events, but I look forward to one.*"
> Participant P9

The principal and secretary indicated that they would welcome the parents' and the community's involvement in the school. They maintained that they always encourage this participation in their newsletters, e-mails, SMSs and, sometimes, even in phone calls.

The findings from the collected data indicate that the school, including the teachers, the principal and the secretary do their best to encourage parents to become more involved with the school by making a positive impact on, and building a strong bond between, teachers and parents by means of the little interaction that exists between them. However, according to the parents there is not much for them to be involved with - other than meetings and small academic-related occasions. The challenge, therefore, is to involve parents and the community more with the school by hosting more events or meetings.

5.3.4. Parental Involvement in Learning Activities at Home

This type of involvement refers to how parents involve themselves in learning activities at home; they have the potential to educate and guide their children in their academic subjects in a home environment.

All the teachers gave different perspectives of the involvement of parents in the learning activities at home.

One teacher admitted that she did not provide any guidance to parents on how to academically support their children at home as it had never crossed her mind that this was an option to assist the learners:

> "*I gave them topics and assignments. Maybe we take them for granted. I should start doing that (providing guidance for parents). I know they (learners) don't like taking letters home, I know they won't tell their parents. I think it's something to consider in the future.*"
> Participant T7

Another teacher who had several years' teaching experience at the school had developed ways to guide parents in academically supporting their child at home. She observed that parents do not easily divulge whether or not their children do academic work at home. According to this teacher, she first assessed the learners and then communicated with the parents to determine whether assistance was provided at home. From the feedback she received she

concluded that not many parents pay much attention to their children. Therefore, she was determined to provide parents with learning strategies to use at home; this included parents who themselves had a poor educational background. Over the years, she had come across many parents who lacked the education to assist their children at home. At some occasions when meetings were held to address a specific concern, such as discipline, this participant noted that other problems arose which either developed into more challenging problems or it facilitated solutions to the original problems. Moreover, she had discovered that the majority of her learners came from homes where they were not taught to respect their parents; many of them did not respect their teachers either which caused other disciplinary issues. She concluded:

> "*Ninety percent of the cases we have dealt with is not a clean slate. The relationship between the parent and child is important. If they cannot respect their mother, how can they start respecting you?*"
> Participant T8

The third teacher provided parents with an assessment plan at the beginning of the year which they could refer to when their children were studying. She also transferred documents to the learners' tablets sourced from textbooks and other educational resources so that parents could access the additional resources as well. This teacher believed that parents had the right to ask the teachers any questions about issues that they found concerning.

There appeared to be some inconsistency in what teachers did to provide parents with assistance. As there was no school policy that guided teachers on how to assist parents, they provided a service based on their knowledge of what was right.

All the parents interviewed stated that they supported their children academically at home by checking their homework; ensuring they were on track; and either rewarding or reprimanding them when required. However, because parents often worked late, there was not always enough time to attend to their children. One

parent maintained that she guided her children to the best of her ability, but admitted that she found herself giving more attention to her younger children. However, she expressed her confidence in the school; she believed that the school encourages a culture of independence where learners are trained to do their own homework and be responsible for their own actions.

The parents also felt that they were not knowledgeable enough to academically support their children at home. Reasons cited for this included the changes in the curriculum over the years as well as learning different methods of obtaining answers in subject areas, such as mathematics. One parent felt that even though the curriculum changed, the value stayed the same – illustrated in the following quote:

> "*You call it curriculum. Curriculum changed since our days. But one plus one is still two. The attitudes towards education should still be the same… I will reach the same answer as the book, using the examples from the book and my OWN method.*"
> Participant P9

The findings suggest that parents do not receive guidance from teachers pertaining to curriculum and content being taught in class. For example, one parent stated that she received general guidance on assisting with discipline at home, but did not receive any academic support. Therefore, she sent her child for external tuition to receive extra guidance and assistance with the content of relevant subjects. She said:

> "*I received general guidance* (on how to support my child at home) - *'make sure she's studying'. I think that's support. What I've done, especially in first and second term, I organized a math tutor for her… Just to say they can complement what I don't know.*"
> Participant P7

In contrast, the principal indicated that she ensured that her teachers always shared information with the parents and up-dated content on the learners' tablets where they accessed their textbooks. She believed that when teachers provide more resources and content, it has a positive impact on the learners' academic progress. However, there appears to be some inconsistency in the perceptions of, as well as a lack of communication between, teachers and the principal as the teachers did not support the principal's assertions. If the principal communicated what was expected of the teachers, it becomes questionable as to why they do not comply.

According to the secretary, parents expected the school and the teachers to do everything. For example, parents expected her to print personal homework tasks and this made her wonder to what extent parents fulfilled their obligations in terms of their responsibilities to their children. This finding showed how blame shifts from one stakeholder to the other due to a lack of understanding the expected roles of all concerned with the education of the children.

From the data findings it seemed that the teachers who participated in this study play different roles in the school; they are different subject teachers who teach a wide range of grades. The teachers cited the following differences concerning how they assist parents to be involved with their children's learning activities at home: one teacher provides no guidance to parents as she has never considered the matter; the second teacher provides learning strategies to parents after assessing the background and commitment levels of the families; and the third teacher provide parents with an assessment plan at the beginning of the year to outline the expectations for the year and also extra electronic resources. Despite different perspectives cited by the teachers, the parents were adamant that they had not receive guidance from teachers and they admitted that they felt they were not knowledgeable enough to assist their children with learning activities at home. This suggests that there is a large inconsistency between what is communicated and what is expected of all stakeholders.

5.3.5. Parental Involvement in Governance and Advocacy

The governance of a school refers to how the Parent-Teacher Association, which in this study's selected school is referred to by a Parent-Advisory Committee (PAC), assists in running a school.

The study findings revealed that all interviewed teachers were not, and had not been, part of a Teacher-Parent Association at this low-fee independent school and that only recently a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) had been created. The information regarding the background of governance in the school was obtained from one of the teachers who participated in the study. The following points emerged in the collected data: as there was no PAC, there were no clear rules and regulations concerning disciplinary measures and procedures and, therefore, teachers were not informed about policies and procedures to follow when disciplining learners; school staff members were not united; academic resources and school facilities were insufficient; and no support was forthcoming from management. The findings indicated that under new leadership, the school has been transformed in terms of the school building that has more structure.

It also emerged that parents wish to be more involved in the governance of the school, which resulted in the formation of the PAC; the platform that parents use to show their commitment and involvement in the school. According to Participant P9,

> "(The formation of the PAC) *is something which I raised in the previous meeting* (informal parent meeting)*, to say that as the school develops, we need to formalise the engagement of the parents. And I was glad when it was communicated that there would be such a body.*"
> Participant P9

All the participant teachers believed that the PAC would have a positive impact on the school as this would be their forum where their voices could be heard. The teachers felt that when parents contributed to policies and procedures for the school, the school's performance would improve. One teacher felt that the

participation of even one parent would make a difference; it would have a ripple-effect as more parents would also become involved in the school to enforce better rules and procedures. Teachers, too, would be encouraged to work harder. She explained:

> "*The PAC is the mouthpiece for every parent. They have a say as to how learning should be conducted in class with regards to the discipline, delivery of study material and distribution of learning material, safety of the classrooms, etc. If there are any adjustments to the standing policies, the PAC has to be involved as well.*"
> Participant T9

One parent was of the opinion that the level of parent and community involvement at the school was satisfactory as she had witnessed parents attending report card meetings and interacting with members of staff at the school. However, the other two parents suggested that this form of involvement was unsatisfactory; a simple example was given citing an e-mail that was sent out to all parents requesting them to attend a meeting at school but only a handful of parents were present. The parents believed that this was a true reflection of the level of parental commitment to the school and their children. Participant P8 added:

> "*I think our parents are not involved enough because when they elected the PAC members, I believe all parents were invited, but only a handful came through. They don't take things as serious as they are.*"
> Participant P8

The parents who were interviewed had recently been elected to the PAC. Since this was a new experience, their roles' had not yet been fully defined but, still the parents were excited to be part of the PAC and look forward to greater collaboration in the future. They expressed the desire to be more solution-oriented to ensure that there is continuous improvement and growth at the school. The parents also felt that they wanted to be better informed about

policies and procedures that the school adhered to in order to improve operational structures.

All stakeholders, including the principal and secretary, were positive about the formation of this new structure which, they believed, would help them establish improved communication and collaboration at the school. The principal explained:

> "*The reason for the PAC being formed is to get more parents involved, to advise us about what can we do to better our security; what can we do to let our children do their homework; and help and advise us about public transport. We also need advice. They are on the ground and they are in the community - we learn a lot from them.*"
> Principal

The principal stated that she would like to see more assistance from the PAC when it came to handling disciplinary meetings, raising funds and the maintenance of the school. She also wanted to see how parents play a role in determining the importance of the various subjects in the school, especially at a high school level.

From the data findings, it seems that prior to the formation of the PAC, parents did not have a specific role to play in this low-fee independent school; they were not involved in the governance of the school. However, under a new leadership a PAC was established to improve parental commitment by allowing parents an opportunity to assist in decision-making at the school; it was thought that an important consequence would be that it could potentially make an impact on learner achievement and the school's success. Both teachers and parents had great hope that the PAC would be a success and they were excited about making a difference through greater collaboration and interaction.

5.3.6. Collaboration and Exchanges

The sixth aspect of the interviews related to the involvement from the community in the affairs of the school. Although parent and community involvement could have had an impact on the overall functioning of a school, it was apparent that community involvement was not viewed as something which was a high priority among the study's participants. Significantly, participants took longer to answer questions pertaining to collaboration and exchanges as they had to reflect more in gathering their thoughts about their experiences.

The study findings indicate that the teachers collaborated and communicated with other organisations such as orphanages, old-age homes, prisons, universities and animal welfare societies. They made the learners and their families aware that giving back to the community was important. In addition, it was thought that visiting places, such as prisons and universities, opened the minds of learners and provided them with a different perspective of the 'world'.

According to one interviewee, there were no barriers to parent and community involvement - just a lack of it. However, one teacher suggested that the biggest barrier was communication and, therefore, related to a basic obligation of the school. Generally, the teachers felt that the level of parent and community involvement was not satisfactory at the school; the most interaction they encountered from parents and the community was on parents' evenings which happened at the beginning of each term. One teacher expressed the view that the parents and companies who were involved were related to learners who excelled at the school. In their responses teachers said that they would like the school to become a centre of community engagement.

The teachers felt that the parents should be invited to the school more frequently, especially to small events, such as market day that was held at school and did not take much time or effort. Another teacher recommended that the school should host a day where parents are invited without their children which would allow teachers and parents to get to know one another. It would 'break the ice'

and make it easier for parents, the community and teachers to communicate in the future. She explained:

> "*I think we need a day where learners don't need to be there; invite parents, even if it's just a snack. Don't invite them over for disciplinary issues or academic issues. Have a social event.*"
> Participant T8

It seemed that parents were not involved with other organisations, universities or the wider community in terms of the school programme and on behalf of the school; one parent stated that the only time she was involved was on Open Days when parents who were interested in the school came to visit, observe and obtain information about the school.

Parents also supported the view that a barrier to parent and community involvement was communication. One parent strongly believed that this was due to the variety of socio-economic backgrounds from which the parents came as not all parents, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, were able to support their children when sending them to an independent school which they could afford; the lack of communication amongst the community at large became more apparent.

Another common barrier that parents observe was that of language; English was not the medium of communication for many which hindered communication between the school, parents and the community. However, the parents who were on the PAC, believed that this would change over time as they intended tackling the problem at their forthcoming meetings and breaking the barrier in communication by encouraging stakeholders to speak English more often. The following quote reflects their responses:

> "*What I've noticed is that because of the make-up of the teacher community here and the catchment area of where our children are coming from, you find that now there's that barrier in terms of that socio-level. Not all of us parents can express ourselves in English adequately.*"
> Participant P9

Some parents believed that there are many ways to improve parent and community involvement at the school; they suggested, however, that it was vitally important that parents 'get on board' again, this was one aspect they wanted to focus on in the PAC. They were of the opinion that once parents were committed, it would be easier for the school to include a knowledge of their socio-economic backgrounds to better develop strategies and events to improve parent and community involvement. One parent suggested that a way to improve this form of involvement was to have more social and fundraising events or even concerts as this would add a different element to the schooling culture and environment. She said:

> "*If they* (the school) *organizes things like that* (fundraising events)*, the fundraising should be organized by the parents. If it's selling, then the parents should bring things to sell, and they should be selling. Make them involved as much as possible.*"
> Participant P8

The principal also believed that a major barrier was that parents were not well-educated due to their socio-economic backgrounds, which resulted in their fear to communicate with teachers. Another barrier which the principal observed identified that either both parents worked or that learners came from single-parent homes, which also resulted in less commitment from families. However, she believed that parents would put in the extra effort if they really wanted to. Her response included the following:

"*They* (parents) *do not really come to the school. If there's a problem, they should phone or send an email. And then there's parents who just leave it* (problem). *It's a big barrier, because father and mother must work to make ends meet.*"

Principal

As the secretary holds an administrative position at the school, she believed that one of the barriers was with the community concerning what they were and were not allowed to communicate and how the community would receive and perceive the communication. She also strongly added that more research needed to be undertaken about the community in order to remove these barriers and improve the standard and quality of communication from the school.

The findings indicate that there are various perspectives related to commitment and parental involvement in the school and the children's progress. However, due to poor communication and collaboration between stakeholders, there was also a lack of exchange between them.

5.4.　CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that teachers seem to welcome more involvement from parents as there are certain aspects of the school and children's education that require their support. It seems that parents also want more communication with teachers and the school; they wish to be made aware of how to support their children and the school. Apparently, the principal and the secretary have been struggling to close gaps caused by the lack of complete commitment and involvement from both parents and teachers. The findings support the researcher's original thinking that the study was essential as it identified the gaps in communication and parental involvement within the school setting.

The next, and final, chapter reaches conclusions drawn from the findings of the study and makes general recommendations as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, conclusions are reached and recommendations are made related to the findings of the study. The chapter is divided into five sections: the first section discusses the nature of parent involvement in the school; the second and third sections focus on the factors that facilitate and hinder parental involvement; the fourth section discusses the management of parental involvement; and the fifth section concludes the chapter with a discussion of recommendations emanating from the study.

6.2. THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

While parental involvement in the school encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, one identified common theme is that parental involvement comes together through interaction and collaboration between teachers, the school and parents as well as social forces, such as changes in technology.

A common characteristic found in the literature and that emerged in the findings of this study is that parents' main obligations are based on morals, values, standards and guidance that should take priority in any household. According to the parents, their role is to provide; to look for quality in education; and to take ownership for doing what is expected of them as parents in enhancing the value of education for their family. This is supported in the research of Chisley (2014) who states that parents end up acting and playing the roles of supporter, teacher, advocate and decision-maker.

At the selected low-fee independent school, there are different categories of parents with a variety of characteristics. The interviewed parents were those who support their children at home and are also actively involved in existing school activities, including parent meetings and other academic-related events; they also tend to be actively involved in the PAC which was recently formed.

However, participants indicated that there were other parents of children at the low-fee independent school who may support their children but do not participate in school activities; there were parents who attend school meetings and events; and there were parents who are hard to reach and do not participate or become involved at all.

All the parents stated that they play a role in educating their children at home, agreeing that schooling continues at home. This was driven by the notion of responsibility; they suggested that their children would only succeed if the children made an effort and if the parents instilled the value of education in them. Parents who may not be academically inclined tend to stress the value of morals, life skills, goal setting and self-motivation. This finding is related to that of Porter (2011) who maintains that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are often those who have lower education levels and, therefore, find it difficult to assist their children with homework.

From the similarities identified between the findings in the literature and those in the study, it was concluded that the nature of parental involvement is clear to parents, teachers and the school. However, there are limitations in terms of what the school and teachers expect of parents and what parents expect of the school and teachers. This does not quite agree with the recommendation made in the literature which states that parents should be made aware of their duties and responsibilities (Bertrand & Deslandes, 2005).

6.3. FACTORS WHICH FACILITATE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The factors that facilitate the involvement of parents include parent-teacher interaction and teacher assistance.

6.3.1. Parent-Teacher Interaction

What facilitates parental involvement is good communication between parents and teachers. The literature suggests that ways of facilitating parental involvement are through listening to parents; encouraging their participation; and giving them more responsibility (Mncube, Harber & du Plessis, 2011). Similarly,

what is suggested in the literature was experienced by the researcher in observing a parent-teacher meeting during this study. It was found that face-to-face interaction between teachers and parents are beneficial to all parties – the parents, teachers and the learners; the teachers listened to the parents and understood the background of the learners, based on the information shared by the parents. Not only did the teachers and parents discuss challenges and opportunities regarding the learners' behaviour and academic progress, but their relationships improved, making the parents' inputs more valued. This, in turn, resulted in improved behaviour and academic learning in the learners.

6.3.2. Teacher Assistance

A factor that facilitates parental involvement pertains to teachers providing parents with learning strategies to use at home with their children. A finding from the study that parents often lacked the knowledge to academically support their children at home. Therefore, assistance from the teachers in this regard is deemed beneficial to the parents and the families of the learners. This is confirmed by the findings of Anderson & Minke (2007) who state that parents of low socio-economic status often do not possess the resources to best assist their children at home. In this study the teachers appeared to know how to encourage parents' participation with their children in the home; it was found that they assisted them to educate their children at home by, for example, showing them how teaching their children something as simple as determining which products to buy based on price and quantity that could help their children in studying Mathematics. It also helped make the teacher's delivery in class efficient and effective as the learners would be able to apply prior knowledge, based on what they had learned at home. This finding supports that of Becker and Epstein (1981) that learning activities enhance parents in the role of tutor, teacher monitor, listener, task initiator, reactor and co-learner as they assist and guide their children in their development at home.

6.4. FACTORS WHICH HINDER PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The factors that hinder parental involvement include their socio-economic status, barriers that are encountered in communication and learning activities at home.

6.4.1. Socio-Economic Status

The socio-economic status of parents or families is a factor that hinders parental involvement; parents work late hours which results in minimal time spent with their children after school. It was also found that some families consist of single parents which contribute to the lack of attention children receive in the home. This confirms the findings of Ndebele (2005) and Porter (2011) who discovered that working parents spend more time earning money for their families than attending school events and helping their children with their school work.

According to the literature, parents of low socio-economic statuses are lowly educated ones who are relatively uninvolved in their children's work or school events (Ndebele, 2005). However, the findings of this study found that all the interviewed parents were involved in their children's education and school events because of their interest in the school and the value they placed on education. The teachers viewed parental involvement as beneficial to the learners and the school but they wished more parents were involved. From the findings, it was concluded that this inconsistency in the extent of parental involvement commitment from all parents was detrimental in this low-fee independent school Bauch (1988) and Porter (2011) maintain that consistent parental involvement is necessary to ensure that challenges are overcome and that the social climate of the school is constantly improved.

6.4.2. Barriers to Communication

Another factor which hinders parental involvement is barriers to communication. The analysis of data pertaining to communication revealed that while all groups of interviewees held different opinions, it was agreed that communication was essentially not effective and sufficient due to the form of communication, the language of communication and the content of messages. This created a wide

gap in enabling parental involvement in the school and in their children's education. Ultimately, the study found that there is a need for more parent-teacher interaction; all stakeholders should have a common understanding of what is expected of the learners, the school and the parents. This is confirmed by Chisley (2014) who found that communication between teachers, administrators and parents enhances learner achievement and school success.

According to the literature, involved parents assist in better communication between teachers, administrators and other parents at schools (Chisley 2014). A finding from this study indicated that teachers easily blame parents for not being efficient in their communication and, likewise, parents blame the teachers. However, one parent did take ownership of his responsibility to communicate; he felt it was his duty to create a relationship with the teacher in order to be more involved in his child's education. It was concluded that not all parents are aware of what is expected of them.

Another viewpoint which is similar to that in the literature was that there was a probability that families' socio-economic backgrounds had an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of communication. It is said that the apparent gap in communication is caused by the mode of communication, including technological means and/or lack of access; a language barrier in communication; or because parents are illiterate. This gap has a great impact on the involvement or non-involvement of parents. In his research, Porter (2011) found that for non-English speakers language was a major barrier in communication which resulted in minimal parental involvement in schools and in their children's education. In addition, Porter (2011) maintains that in terms of school receptivity technology is a barrier to communication as parents from low socio-economic backgrounds often do not have access to it or simply find it an impersonal form of communication with of which they are not comfortable.

A further viewpoint from the study suggests that parents do not receive communication from teachers when it involves their child only; communication

received is usually related to the whole class or grade. Besides group meetings, the parents said that they would welcome individual/personalised guidance/assistance regarding their children. This would make them feel more involved and appreciated. It confirms Becker and Epstein (1981) who claim that parents prefer small group meetings rather than larger ones which they consider to be impersonal.

In this study, timing was considered to be important; the parents maintained that they could not help their children at the beginning of a term based on the previous term's academic results. This finding should be a reason for parents to be encouraged to take the initiative in meeting the teachers more frequently and being more involved in their children's education.

6.4.3. Learning Activities at Home

A factor which hinders parental involvement is the inconsistency of teachers providing assistance for parents at home. The findings of the study show that while one teacher did not provide any assistance for parents, the other two provided it in different ways, including providing individual assistance based on learners' personal weaknesses and uploading resources on learners' tablets for the whole class/grade. The strategy could be seen as facilitating parental involvement, based on different means of providing assistance. However, it may also largely be seen as an aspect which hinders parental involvement as not all teachers are consistent in providing resources or guidance in all learning areas for further study at home. It was found that another view held by parents was that they did not feel knowledgeable enough to academically guide their children at home and that they would prefer more content-driven guidance. This is similar to the findings of Porter (2011) who discovered that parents either had an English language deficiency, or simply did not possess the skills or knowledge to assist their children at home.

6.5. THE SCHOOL'S MANAGEMENT ROLE IN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The study findings revealed many challenges that the school faces, such as parents not realising the importance of meetings when they are held; the commitment from teachers appearing to be far higher than the commitment from parents; and the lack of communication causes negative feelings amongst teachers and parents.

However, this study unveiled the potential of tackling these challenges in a new committee which has recently been formed at the school, known as the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The data collected found evidence of issues that could potentially be explored by this committee to improve parental involvement in the school. Porter (2011), Chisley (2014) and Lemmer and Wyk (2004) believe that advisory committees assist in informed decision-making as well as with the quality education of learners.

The findings of this study indicate that all the participants are looking forward to what this committee could achieve to make a positive impact on the school. All the parents who were consistently involved in the school appeared to be solution-oriented and looked for continuous growth. The teachers, too, believed that parents could make a positive impact on the school's management, structure, policy and procedures and results as well as on staff morale.

It was recommended that the following were possible items that could be explored and addressed by the Parent Advisory Committee members in their meetings:
- Encourage more parents to be involved in their children's education by participating in school events and to support their children academically at home.
- Encourage the school to host more events that could improve parental involvement.
- Improve communication whereby parents want to receive information more often than just once a term to assist their child during the term.

- Encourage communication between parents and teachers. Parents need to understand that their relationship with teachers is a two-way process. This is highlighted in the literature by Halsey (2005).
- Explore the identified gap between the levels of education and involvement of low socio-economic families in the school; it might take some time to fill, unless there is an understanding between how the school delivers its services and how the parents wish to be involved. This should be addressed in meetings to improve the level of communication.
- Organize sensitisation activities related to the importance of education which could potentially result in more successful learner achievements.
- Develop guidelines of parents' responsibilities to learners and to the school.
- Assist in dealing with discipline, raising funds and maintaining the school. Koross, *et al* (2009) explores this aspect in the literature.

6.6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The three key recommendations to be made from the findings of this study are related to improving communication and relationships between teachers and parents; the role functions of the PAC; and recommendations for further research.

6.6.1. Improving Communication and Relationships between Teachers and Parents

Teachers should create relationships with parents in order to enhance commitment, involvement and learner achievement. This is supported by the findings of Becker and Epstein (1981) which suggest that personal contact between parents and teachers is an important tool to improve the commitment of parents to participate in learner's educational lives. Ultimately, parental involvement requires teacher and parent commitment (Becker & Epstein, 1981). In addition, Porter (2011) believes that the cornerstone for learner achievement in any school is the involvement of the schools, parents and communities. Therefore, parents should be made aware of what is expected of them in their

roles as parents of the school. The school or the PAC should provide parents with the knowledge and skills which they will need in order to ensure the success of their children's education as well as that of the school.

6.6.2. The Role Functions the PAC

The Parent Advisory Committee should be maintained and be successful in upholding the standards of the school. Through the growth of the committee, many ideas could be developed and implemented, such as the introduction of guidance newsletters for parents; parent education programmes; career exploration programmes; learner tutoring programmes; staff development programmes; counselling activities for learners and their families; and assessment programmes to find solutions to bridging existing gaps in communication and to make a success of the school (Downing, 1997). The PAC should also participate in the designing, drafting and implementation of policies and procedures, such as a disciplinary code of conduct.

6.6.3. For Further Research Recommendations

Further research should be done in and around the school in order to close the gap in communication which currently exists between teachers and parents and between the school and the community. The research should investigate the socio-economic backgrounds of families and the surrounding communities and expectations related to the roles of stakeholders.

6.5.   CONCLUSION

This research focused on exploration and discovering insights that would lead to an understanding of the perspectives of interviewed participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher selected a study design which she considered best suited to the research problem and questions before qualitative data was collected in the field. This was followed by an analysis of the data which resulted in the study's findings.

The findings from research of parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa has enabled the researcher to reflect on her

current role and identify new strategies that may be used in the school, such as educating teachers about the importance of their relationships with parents. This would possibly improve parental involvement in her school setting.

Through researching the relevant available literature and delving more deeply into Joyce Epstein's framework, it has made the researcher realise how important parental involvement is in attaining learner achievement. Parents play an important role in all children's lives; they depend on their parents for love, support and guidance in order to achieve success at school.

It became clear that the importance of communication was first and foremost in enhancing parental involvement as it motivates and drives the commitment of parents, teachers and the school. Therefore, parents and teachers should be willing to, and want to, achieve learner success; to do this they require a common understanding of, and base for individual expectations of the roles that they play.

The findings made the researcher realise that when parents lack commitment, it results in learners not caring about themselves. This is a major concern as teachers want their learners to succeed, but if they do not have the support of parents they cannot achieve success improvement in learner development.

The researcher strongly believes that parental involvement is an important variable that influences learner achievement; she believes that it should be mandatory in any school environment to enhance school success. It will expand the social and cognitive abilities of teachers and parents in terms of academic and social school events; and improve professional development amongst teachers. The commitment and involvement of all parties promotes the development and growth of individuals and schools in any environment.

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APPENDIX A: Letter of Introduction For Participation in Academic Research

Curro Holdings (Curro Academy, Pretoria)

Dear Principal

Request to conduct research at Curro Academy Pretoria

My name is Taneeta Kooverjee. I am a registered Master's degree student in the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor is Professor Chaya Herman.

The purpose of my intended study will be to explore the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent school in South Africa and how this may be promoted at the school.

I am, hereby, requesting consent to conduct research in your school. I wish to be granted permission to conduct interviews with the school secretary- and selected parents and teachers. The interviews should take approximately between 45 minutes and 1 hour at a place convenient to the participants. In addition, I would like to sit in on parent-teacher meetings where I will acquaint myself with the topics and their content addressed at these meetings; to record the duration of the meetings; and to observe the commitment/involvement of the parents.

I would also appreciate it if you will grant me an interview to share your experiences and insights on the topic.

The study will adhere to the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria in terms of the following:

▪ The research will involve **anonymous** interviews. The school, teachers and parents will be referred to by pseudonyms and the answers information will be treated as strictly **confidential**. Participants will not personally be identified based on their answers given to questions.

▪ Participants may choose not to participate and may also end the interviews at any time without any negative consequences.

▪ Participants will be given an opportunity to comment on the transcriptions of the interviews - should they wish to do so.

▪ The results of the study will be used for academic purposes **only** and will be published in an academic journal.

Please contact my study supervisor, Prof. Chaya Herman, if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

_____   _____
PROF CHAYA HERMAN   TANEETA KOOVERJEE
Supervisor   Student
Email: chaya.herman@up.ac.za   Email: taneeta07@gmail.com
                                                                                    Cell: 073 246 3959

Faculty of Education

APPENDIX B: Letter of Introduction For Participation in Academic Research

Curro Holdings (Curro Academy, Pretoria)

Dear Participant

Request to conduct research at Curro Academy Pretoria

My name is Taneeta Kooverjee. I am a registered Master's degree student in the Department of Education at the University of Pretoria. I would like to invite you to participate in an academic research study on parental involvement in a low-fee independent secondary school in South Africa.

The purpose of the study is to explore the nature of parental involvement in a low-fee independent school in South Africa and how it may be promoted in the school.

I would appreciate it if you would agree to an interview to discuss your insights of the topic. The interview should take approximately between 45 minutes and 1 hour at a place convenient to you. With your permission I would like to record the interview.

The study will adhere to the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria in terms of the following:

▪ The research will involve **anonymous** interviews. Participants will be referred to by pseudonyms and the information received will be treated as strictly **confidential**. Participants will not personally be identified based on their answers given to questions.

▪ Participants may choose not to participate and may also end the interviews at any time without any negative consequences.

▪ Participants will be given an opportunity to comment on the transcriptions of the interviews - should they wish to do so.

▪ The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and will be published in an academic journal.

Please contact my study supervisor, Prof. Chaya Herman, if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

_____   _____
PROF CHAYA HERMAN   TANEETA KOOVERJEE
Supervisor   Student
Email: chaya.herman@up.ac.za   Email: taneeta07@gmail.com
                                           Cell: 073 246 3959

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APPENDIX C: Letter of Consent for Participation in Academic Research

I, ..., agrees for research to be conducted in this school.

1. I understand that the research will be concerned with exploring parental involvement in a low–fee independent secondary school in South Africa.
2. I understand that the Master's degree research will be submitted for the publication in an academic journal.
3. I understand that the anonymity of data will be guaranteed in the publication in the following ways:
    a. The school will not be named; it will be described as a low-fee independent school in South Africa.
    b. The names of interviewees will not be used; they will be described only in terms of their level of appointment and they will be referred to using pseudonyms.
    c. No detail will be included in the article which could be used to identify a particular institution or individual.
4. The data will be protected in the following way:
    a. The audio recordings will be securely stored by the principal investigators. No persons other than the principal investigators and the person transcribing the data will have access to these files.
    b. The person transcribing the data will be required to sign an agreement of confidentiality.
    c. In the transcriptions pseudonyms for the interviewees will be used - not their names.
5. I understand that participation in the research is voluntary and participants may withdraw from it at any point.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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APPENDIX D: Letter of Consent for Participation in Academic Research

I, ..., agree to be interviewed for this research.

6. I understand that the research will be concerned with exploring parental involvement in a low–fee independent secondary school in South Africa.
7. I understand that the Master's degree research will be submitted for the publication in an academic journal.
8. I understand that the anonymity of data will be guaranteed in the publication in the following ways:
   a. The school will not be named; it will be described as a low-fee independent school in South Africa.
   b. The names of interviewees will not be used; they will be described only in terms of their level of appointment and they will be referred to using pseudonyms.
   c. No detail will be included in the article which could be used to identify a particular institution or individual.
9. The data will be protected in the following way:
   a. The audio recordings will be securely stored by the principal investigators. No persons other than the principal investigators and the person transcribing the data will have access to these files.
   b. The person transcribing the data will be required to sign an agreement of confidentiality.
   c. In the transcriptions pseudonyms for the interviewees will be used - not their names.
10. I understand that participation in the research is voluntary and I may withdraw from it at any point.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E: Interview Schedule for Parents

1. BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS

   1.1. What do you consider to be your duties and responsibilities towards your children?

   1.2. Do you believe that you play a role in educating your child? How?

2. BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF SCHOOLS

   2.1. Is information such as academic progress of your children and school programmes communicated to you?

   2.2. How is this information communicated?

   2.3. How often is this information communicated?

   2.4. How do teachers make you feel; based on your involvement in school activities?

   2.5. What was the best introductory letter received from your school, and why?

   2.6. Do you feel that you receive enough information from the school?

3. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT SCHOOL

   3.1. Do you participate in social and academic events at the school? Why, or why not?

   3.2. How often do you participate in the social and academic events of the school?

4. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

   4.1. Do you feel that you support your child academically at home?

   4.2. Do you feel knowledgeable enough to academically support your children? Why, or why not?

   4.3. Have you received guidance from teachers on how to support your child academically at home?

   4.4. If so, please elaborate on the type of guidance received.

   4.5. What is your knowledge level concerning the development of school programmes?

5. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNENACE AND ADVOCACY

   5.1. Are you, or have you been part of a 'Parent-Teacher Association'?

   5.2. Do you make an input in the decisions made by the school?

5.3. What do you want to know when you attend parent-teacher conferences/meetings?

6. COLLABORATION AND EXCHANGES

6.1. Do you, or have you been involved with other businesses, organizations, universities or wider communities as part of school programmes?

6.2. If so, what effect has this had on the school?

6.3. In your opinion, are there barriers to parent and community involvement?

6.4. If yes, how has the school dealt with these barriers?

6.5. In your opinion, is the level of parent and community involvement at the school satisfactory? Why, or why not?

6.6. Which strategies/events/activities do you consider effective in increasing parent and community involvement at the school?

APPENDIX F: Interview Schedule for Teachers

1. BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS
   1.1. What do you consider to be the duties and responsibilities of parents to their children?
   1.2. Do you believe that parents play a role in educating their children? How?

2. BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF SCHOOLS
   2.1. Is information such as the academic progress of learners and the school programmes communicated to parents?
   2.2. How is this information communicated to parents?
   2.3. How often is this information communicated to parents?
   2.4. Do you believe the relationship between teachers and parents to be equal? (Please elaborate)

3. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT SCHOOL
   3.1. Do you encourage parents to participate in the social and academic events of the school? Why, or why not?
   3.2. How is this participation encouraged?
   3.3. What is the impact on learners when they observe their parents' commitment to the school?
   3.4. What is the impact on the school when parents are involved in school activities?

4. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME
   4.1. Do you, or have you provided guidance for parents on how to academically support their children at home?
   4.2. Elaborate on the type of guidance given.
   4.3. How are parents kept informed about decisions taken in the development of school programmes?

5. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY
   5.1. Are you, or have you been part of a 'Parent-Teacher Association'?
   5.2. What effect does parental input into decisions have on the quality of education, and the school's efficiency and effectiveness?

6. COLLABORATION AND EXCHANGES

    6.1. Do you, or have you worked with other businesses, organizations, universities or wider communities as part of school programmes?

    6.2. If so, what effect has this had on the school?

    6.3. In your opinion, are there barriers to parent and community involvement?

    6.4. If yes, how has the school dealt with these barriers?

    6.5. In your opinion, is the level of parent and community involvement at the school satisfactory? Why, or why not?

    6.6. Which strategies/events/activities do you consider effective in increasing parent and community involvement at the school?

APPENDIX G: Interview Schedule for Principal and Secretary

1. BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS
   1.1. What do you consider to be the duties and responsibilities of parents to their children?
   1.2. Do you believe that parents play a role in educating their children? How?

2. BASIC OBLIGATIONS FOR SCHOOLS
   2.1. Is information, such as academic progress of learners and school programmes communicated to parents?
   2.2. How is this information communicated to parents?
   2.3. Do you have any designs or strategies in place which are used for parents and teachers to communicate with one another?
   2.4. What are these designs or strategies?
   2.5. In your opinion, are these designs or strategies deemed to be effective in communication?
   2.6. Do you believe the relationships between teachers and parents to be equal? (Please elaborate)

3. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT SCHOOL
   3.1. Do you encourage parents to participate in social and academic events at the school? Why, or why not?
   3.2. How is this participation encouraged?
   3.3. What is the impact on learners when they observe their parents' commitment to the school?
   3.4. What is the impact on the school when parents are involved at the school?

4. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME
   4.1. Do you, or have you provided guidance to parents on how to academically support their children at home?
   4.2. Elaborate on the type of guidance given.
   4.3. How are parents kept informed about decisions taken in the development of school programmes?

5. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY
   5.1. Is there a 'Parent-Teacher Association'?

5.2. If so, how involved are teachers and parents in this association?

5.3. What effect does parent input in decisions have on the quality of education, and the school's efficiency and effectiveness?

6. COLLABORATION AND EXCHANGES

6.1. Do you, or have you worked with businesses, organizations, universities or the wider community as part of school programmes?

6.2. If so, what effect has it had on the school?

6.3. In your opinion, are there barriers to parental and community involvement?

6.4. If yes, how has the school dealt with these barriers?

6.5. In your opinion, is the level of parental and community involvement at the school satisfactory? Why, or why not?

6.6. Which strategies/events/activities do you consider effective in increasing parental and community involvement at the school?

APPENDIX H: Observation Schedule

1. Do parents raise concerns openly with teachers?
2. Do teachers offer help/assistance/guidance with any matters pertaining to the social and academic well-being of their children?
3. Do parents show as interest in what teachers do and say?
4. Do teachers provide resources or documentation for parents to take home with them?
5. Are issues addressed?