

# IMPLICATIONS OF PARENT-TEACHER COLLABORATION FOR LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

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## Abstract

This study investigated the challenges faced by teachers and parents in attempting to collaborate to improve learners' academic performance in the Foundation Phase. The study adopted a qualitative approach with a case study design, within the interpretive research paradigm. The aim was to interpret the interaction of parents and teachers and how they can collaboratively work as a team to improve the academic performance of learners. Six educators and six parents were purposively sampled based on the level of their interaction. Epstein's work provided a theoretical lens to understand issues of teacher-parent collaboration within the school context. The study revealed that due to inadequate training and a clear strategy, parents and teachers did not know how to work together to help learners with academic work. It emerged that teachers did not know how to go about involving parents in education. The study concluded that poor working relations between parents and teachers affect learners' academic performance in the Foundation Phase. The study recommends that teachers should receive training on how to work with parents to improve learners' academic performance. Moreover, the study recommended that schools should create a welcoming space for parents to participate in their children's education.

**Keywords:** Parental Involvement, Foundation Phase, Parent-Teacher Collaboration

## Introduction and Background

The parent-teacher working relationship is paramount to improve the performance of learners in schools. When there is a good relationship between parents and teachers, learners are likely to perform better academically (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). Lack of parent-teacher working relations can result in poor academic performance of learners in the Foundation Phase (Singh et al., 2004; Jeynes, 2018; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). The advantages and disadvantages of parent-teachers working relations will be looked at to establish an improved strategy for parents and teachers to work effectively together. In the United States of America (USA) the federal educational mandates such as the "No Child Left Behind" legislation in 2004 developed a program to strengthen parents' role in the education process in assisting and enhancing their child's learning (Hursh, 2004). The results show that parents' upbringing strategies were not meeting the objectives of child care and that caused friction between the home and professionals. Knowledgeable parents seem to disagree more with professionals (teachers) and professionals could not back down to agree with parents. In Russia, it was emphasised that early educators (Foundation Phase) should form and maintain positive relationships with parents and find mutual understandings concerning the early education and development process of the child (Savinskaya, 2015). Similar to the USA, many conflicts have been reported in South Africa when parents are working with teachers. It is evident

that there is a need for parent-teacher working relations to be investigated and support should be given to parents. Thus the present study aims at suggesting strategies that could be used by parents and teachers with the view to support learners' academic performance. Parents should receive appropriate information on their children's achievements, and they should be offered opportunities to approach staff to discuss any concerns they may have (UNESCO, 2011).

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) shows that South Africa was placed last out of all 50 countries that participated (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod, 2017). This shows a huge need for interventions in the Foundation Phase. Thus the present study investigated the challenges faced by parents and teachers' working relations to suggest strategies that could be employed. Gunderson and Levine (2011) argue that the input of every parent is important and that schools should collaborate with all parents in addressing learners' performance. Durišić and Bunijevac (2017) indicate that parents play a critical role in teaching their children to communicate before they can be enrolled in formal school. Moreover, Vandormael, Schoenhals, Hüppi, Filippa and Borradori (2019) maintain that language and learning are developed while the baby is still in the uterus. Learning is thus taking place long before a child can be educated by a skilled teacher, and parents are doing most of the teaching in the initial stages of the child's life.

Singh et al. (2004) argue that parental involvement in education is influenced by several factors, and social class is one of the most crucial aspects. Singh et al. (2004) further define social class as a status hierarchy in which individuals and groups are classified based on esteem and prestige, acquired through economic success and the accumulation of wealth. Durišić and Bunijevac (2017) argue that parental involvement in education is vital, irrespective of the socio-economic status of the parents. Similar to Durišić and Bunijevac (2017), Singh et al. (2004) and Epstein (2015) emphasises that social class has nothing to do with parental involvement in schools. It is the responsibility of teachers to invite all parents to be involved in their children's education and show them that their ideas are valued. The study by Hursh (2004) shows how children's social behaviour reflects their background. It is the responsibility of parents to shape the character and behaviour of their children before they can be enrolled in formal schooling. In addition to shaping their character, parents can also teach their children to print their names and read simple words in preparation for school. Parents cannot simply send their children to school to learn how to behave and prepare for the future, because the responsibility for the children's education should be shared between parents and teachers (Muller & Kerbow, 2018). Various official documents have reported on parental involvement in education. The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) outlined the expectation that parents must be meaningful partners in the curriculum and governance of the school. The Act anticipates that school-based educators will collaborate with parents to ensure that there is quality education (SASA, 1996). Learners' academic performance is therefore envisaged as the collective responsibility of parents and teachers. Schools are expected to have policies and committees determining parental involvement.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) declares that children have the right to be supported by their parents as they grow and develop (Ruck, Keating, Saewyc, Earls & Ben-Arieh, 2016). The corollary is that parents should ensure that children's rights are respected, and to fulfil this obligation, parents need practical support from teachers. Yet despite the universal scope of these documents regarding parental involvement, there is still a perception that some parents may not have the skills to contribute to their children's education. Some parents might have a low level of education, and some might be ignorant and not take responsibility for their children's education (Msila, 2016). It is for this reason that the researcher investigated the current state of parental involvement in schools, specifically how parents and teachers in the Foundation Phase classroom might be prepared to work together as a team to improve learners' academic performance. The article aims to produce strategies that can be used by parents and teachers to support learners to achieve in their academic activities.

## **Literature Review**

Numerous studies have been done on parent-teacher working relations, but little research was done on parental involvement in the Foundation Phase for the South African context. It was found that not all authors believe that parental involvement in their children's education is the best solution to improve learner performance (Cooper, 2015). It was anticipated that parents of low socioeconomic status (SES) are likely to be ignored by teachers, while preference is given to parents and learners with high SES (Schussler, 2013). A study conducted by Okeke (2014) shows that parents are reluctant to be part of school decision-making because of their low levels of education and English competency. Malatji and Malatji (2021) points out that some parents feel that their ideas are of little value and teachers do not take them seriously.

In the current climate of educational change in South Africa, researchers are focusing on factors that might enhance quality education and improve learners' academic performance (Okeke, 2014). Msila (2016) indicated that learners' background, socio-economic status, and community are the main factors responsible for their poor academic performance. In South Korea, an approach for parents to take part in their children's education has been implemented. The approach "Parent Education" was used to express that parents are objects for education (Lee & Song, 2012). In the development stage of the approach in South Korea, the phrase that was used was "Parent/Family Involvement". The phrase simply means that parents stand equal with the teachers. This is evident that in some countries there are initiatives to involve parents in education. However, this has not been the case in South Africa. The South African School Act (1996) stipulates the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers. Section 16A of the South African Schools Act (1996) indicates that the School Management Team and School Governing Body should train and capacitate parents with knowledge of educational laws and principles. Capacitating parents with knowledge on how they can be involved in education will enable them to know their roles and responsibilities regarding collaboration with teachers to develop the child holistically.

Nonetheless, studies show that when parents and teachers are asked about the policy, they have never seen the document before (Singh et al., 2004; Okeke, 2014).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used the theory by Epstein (1996) on family and community partnerships. The theory explains parental involvement in terms of two perspectives on family and school relations. These are firstly, separate responsibilities for families and schools, in terms of which parents separate themselves from school activities. Parents in the USA feel that the only step they can take to be part of the school is to help with homework. Similar to South Africa, the study by Msila (2014) shows that parents feel that helping their children with homework is enough. Researchers such as Okeke (2014), Masha (2017), and Moyo (2013) agree that parents have more than one responsibility in their children's education, a responsibility that should be ongoing rather than engaging in sporadic devotion to a single activity.

The second perspective distinguished by Epstein (1996) is that of shared responsibilities among families and schools. In the context of this study, the teachers and parents need to share ideas on how to best educate children and improve their academic achievement. Sharing responsibilities between the school and home emphasises coordination, cooperation, and the complementary roles of schools and families. In this study, the focus is thus on how parents and teachers can share the responsibility for the socialisation and academic development of children; engaging with each other to improve academic performance.

### **Epstein's Theory on Parental Involvement**

Epstein's framework comprises six key principles regarding parental involvement in education: parenting, communicating, volunteering, helping learners at home, decision-making, and collaboration. These principles are discussed as they are relevant to the focus and context of learner performance in the Foundation Phase.

#### ***Parenting***

Teachers should help families to establish a home environment that supports children as students, particularly in the Foundation Phase when there is a need to establish a sturdy base for future learning. Some researchers have revealed that children's background has serious implications for how they learn (Epstein, 2011; Msila, 2014). If a child's home environment has space for learning, it could result in the improvement in their academic performance. Teachers need to assist families to understand their children's development and provide home conditions that support them as students at each age and grade level (Feasley, 2017). Epstein (2018) also insists that teachers help parents and families to understand the school and the requirements of schooling. Epstein (2018) used the example that during parents' meetings, teachers can take the opportunity to address the importance of parental involvement and the question of how parents can participate in their children's education.

### **Communication**

Communication is key to a good partnership. Epstein (1996) observed that there should be clear channels of communication between parents and teachers to promote sound collaboration. Malatji, Mavuso and Malatji (2018) found that teachers tend to communicate with parents only when the child has done something wrong or when issuing a semester progress report without any form of discussion. Teachers should engage with parents about the academic progress of their children (whether positive or negative) and plan for improvement. Epstein (1996) suggests that teachers should meet with every parent at least once a year, and conduct follow-ups if needed. When there is effective communication between the teachers and parents, parents will feel free to discuss any challenges they are experiencing with their children's development that might be affecting their academic achievement.

### **Volunteering**

The framework by Epstein (1996) on parental involvement indicates out that teachers should recruit and organise the assistance and support of the parents. Teachers, led by the SMT, should encourage parents to volunteer to participate in school activities and affairs. It was noted that teachers have too much paperwork and administration (Malatji et al., 2018). Parents can help with administration, cleaning, after-care, and many other school duties. If parents could volunteer to collaborate with teachers to promote their children's education, learners' academic performance could be improved. Epstein (2011) points out that volunteering at school is not restricted to school hours and school buildings. The more voluntary assistance the school receives from the parents, the more smoothly teaching and learning will run.

### **Helping Learners at Home**

The framework by Epstein (2011) further emphasises that parents should help their children at home and provide information and ideas on how to cope with school. Parents or guardians should also help with other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. If parents could teach their children good planning skills, learners will be able to plan how and when to do their schoolwork and not miss deadlines. Helping learners with their schoolwork is not necessarily doing it for them. Cooper (2015) shows that parents tend to do the homework for their children.

### **Decision-Making**

The school must involve parents in decision-making for parents to feel welcome and part of the educational process. Epstein (2015) suggests that teachers should include parents in school decisions, thereby developing parental leaders and representatives. If parents are involved in their children's education, learners' academic performance is likely to improve. Epstein (2015) envisages decision-making as a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, and not the result of a power struggle between conflicting ideas. Parents should not only be involved during the conflict but also in general to improve learner

performance. Cabus and Ariès (2017) observe that parents can take an active role in decision-making in schools by becoming involved in school governance committees and other organs of the school community.

### **Collaboration**

Since a school is situated in a community, there should be a good working relationship between the school and the community. Parents in the community must collaborate with teachers in the school to plan how best teaching and learning can take place. Epstein (2011) recommends that the school must identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Ndebele (2015) shows that some rural schools in South Africa use churches and community halls as a library and learning space when no other activities are occurring in the building.

### **Research Methodology**

The study followed a qualitative research approach. Exploratory research was undertaken to venture into an unknown area to gain insight and understanding of a particular phenomenon (Snyder, 2019). The purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, considering the relevant context (Hill & Tyson, 2008). The present study investigates the parent-teacher working relationship to support learners in their academic work. Concerning research design, the researcher employed descriptive case studies to obtain extensive information on the implications of parent-teacher working relations for learners' academic performance in the Foundation Phase. Participants in this study consisted of six parents and six teachers with at least three years of teaching experience from three schools. The total number of participants was 12. Parents were randomly selected from the learners' rollcall provided by the teacher. Purposive sampling was used to select three schools; one with high academic performance, one that has an average performance, and one with low academic performance. The reasons for selecting these schools were to determine if parental involvement was a contributing to good and poor academic performance.

The research questions were guided by Epstein's framework that comprised of six key principles. Participants had to answer the research question based on how parents can volunteer, be part of the decision-making in the school, how to communicate, how to support their children at home, and how to effectively collaborate with the teachers. The main research question that was asked during one-on-one semi-structured interviews was:

What are the implications of parent-teacher collaboration for learners' academic performance in the Foundation Phase?

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain detailed insight into collaborative practices (Creswell, 2012). The thematic approach is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts, thus the present study followed thematic analysis. The researcher reduced the data to essential units which

were then broken down systematically into unambiguous units. These were later shared to provide an overall view of the phenomenon.

## **Results and Discussion**

It was found in this study that there is no working relationship between parents and teachers. The results of poor working relations showed a huge negative impact on learners' academic performance. The results of learners whose parents were not involved in their education were extremely poor. T2 from school A highlighted that: *"Looking at the work schedule and performance of learners in class you can see that learners that pass are those whose parents come to school regularly. But learners who perform badly are those whose parents do not come to school when they are been called."*

It was also found that teachers and parents have no idea of how to work together to improve learners' academic performance. Teachers and parents showed that they did not receive training on how to work as a team. The results showed that there is also a lack of teamwork, lack of parental involvement, lack of shared responsibility, and inadequate training.

### **Teamwork**

The study revealed that although parents and teachers do work together as a team in the two schools selected, there was no evidence on how parents and teachers supported learners' academic performance. Some of the participants indicated that certain parents never visit the school. Those parents are irresponsible, as they do not care about their children's education. Epstein (2011) regards this as poor parenting. Msila (2016) revealed that most learners who do not perform well in school are from families who do not take their children's education seriously. T4 from school B had this to say:

*"I don't know how many times I called parents of learners who are not performing to come to school but they never come."*

Parents from school B contradicted what the teacher said. P3 showed that the teachers only called them to school when their children have misbehaved. She noted that:

*"I know that I have a problem child, but I have never been called to the school to discuss how we can support him. It's only when he has beaten or stolen something from other kids that I will be called. I am tired of that. That is why I am no longer going to school when I am being called."*

The above responses show that there is a need to train teachers on the kind of support they must give to parents. This showed that there is no teamwork in schools. The current study was conducted in a circuit where 80% of the schools are in rural areas. Therefore, partly because of their level of literacy, parents did not see the need to work with teachers to assist learners to perform better.

Feasley (2017) revealed that most parents who do not cooperate with teachers are illiterate and do not value education very highly. In the current study, some parents argued as follows:

*“We are not forced to work with teachers because the government is paying teachers to do the work. If I work with teachers, who are going to pay me as a parent?”*

It is apparent from this that the parents concerned neither understand the importance of education, nor recognise their potential role in the education space. Epstein (2011) regards communication as one of the critical elements for successful collaboration. In this study, the role of parents needs to be communicated to ensure stronger teamwork between parents and teachers. Muller and Kerbow (2018) maintain that it is the responsibility of teachers to create a welcoming environment for parents and clarify the value of parents' participation in their children's education. Epstein (2011) articulates that when parents and teachers are collaboratively working as a team, there is an increase in skills and talent through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences.

### **Lack of Parental Involvement**

The lack of parental involvement in rural schools was found to be a common factor affecting learners' academic performance. According to one parent: “Teachers are trained to do the teaching, so they must just leave us alone as parents and do their work.” This statement suggests that parents lack the agency to assist their children with schoolwork. In his work on parental involvement, Epstein (2018) clearly articulates the importance of parental involvement, particularly in the Foundation Phase where a solid educational foundation must be laid. The present study also revealed that teachers did not seek to involve parents in their children's education. When teachers were more engaged on issues of parental involvement in education, **T2** and **T3** from school A and B strongly emphasised that:

*“Parents are sometimes disturbing teaching and learning. They spoil their kids at home and when we as teachers try to discipline the child, parents are always blaming us. Even when you give learners homework, they don't help their children. So it is better to be independent as teachers because parents add more problems than solutions.”*

The response from these teachers showed a lack of sensitivity towards parents. The above-mentioned teachers were even laughing when they responded to the question. This shows a lack of knowledge and understanding of parental involvement. Studies by Rapp and Duncan (2012), Msila (2016), and Epstein (2018) concur that for parents to become involved in their children's educational progress, is the best strategy to improve learners' results in schools. Parents of learners in the schools under study did not know how to go about being involved in their children's education. **P3** from school B had this to say when she was asked why she is not involved in her child's education:



*“Am I supposed to be a teacher to my child? I support her because I help with homework. I cannot be disturbing teachers at school and do their work. Teachers know how to teach because they went to the college to learn how to teach and I did not.”*

**P2** from school B added that:

“I will not help the teacher to teach my child. I took my child to school because I cannot teach. The schools do not allow us to go to school during school hours. So I can't bother myself.”

Even though the South African Schools Act (1996) describes the potential roles of parents in schools, it seems to have been ignored. Some teachers do not even know what the SASA is and do not have it in the school. Moyo (2013) emphasises that schools with little parental involvement are likely to produce poor academic results.

It was also revealed that some schools did not want to involve parents in the children's education for several reasons. The participants from the schools under study indicated that most learners in rural schools stay with their guardians (usually grandparents), who are too old to be active in the school community. Epstein (2011) underscores the importance of helping learners at home, but this is almost impossible in the circumstances revealed in this study. The results of the study suggest that teachers have no option but to assume full responsibility for educating learners, without involving their parents. One teacher indicated that: “We are now tired to call parents to school because they never honour our invitation. As for now, we have decided to forget about parents and continue with teaching just like during the Bantu education.” Consequently, Cooper (2015) cautions that too much involvement of parents in the school might lead to conflict between teachers and parents, as parents are not trained to handle educational issues professionally. Epstein's (2018) category of communication points to the importance of communication between parents and teachers to avoid any conflict that might arise. What emerged from the study was that SMTs and teachers should also be trained and guided on the importance of parental involvement in the school and parents instructing their children at home.

Some teachers thought that involving parents in education was merely to encourage parents to help their children with homework. **T4** strongly articulated that:

*“Yes, parents in my class are involved in their children's education. They help their children with homework.”*

Parental involvement can go far beyond helping with homework to active involvement in school activities to promote quality teaching and learning. Masha (2017) argues that parental involvement contributes to the holistic development of learners. In this study, it emerged that parents have no idea of what might be expected of them by the school. **P1** showed that she is illiterate and cannot help her child with homework or any other educational matters because they are difficult. Epstein (2011) showed that the teachers should involve families and their children in all important curriculum-related decisions in the school.

### **Lack of Shared Responsibility**

This study revealed that the sharing of responsibilities between parents and teachers were minimal. Some parents indicated that it was the responsibility of teachers to teach learners, while teachers for their part felt that it was the parents' responsibility to reinforce what was done in school. **T1** and **T4** mentioned that:

*“Parents must teach their children before they can formally be enrolled in a normal school. Instead, parents leave all the work to teachers.”*

Epstein (2011) talks of assisting learners at home as a critical element in successful collaboration. The issue of learners' academic performance requires both pedagogical and disciplinary input, which should involve both parents and teachers. Epstein (2015) insists that parents, as well as teachers, should play a vital role in improving school results. However, in this study it was clear that teachers believed that they were in a better position to propose strategies for adoption by schools to boost academic results. The response from **T2** and **T3** mentioned above showed that they do not try to engage parents and share responsibilities. Epstein (2011) supports this when noting that parents from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school should be included in the decision-making of the school.

### **Inadequate Training**

The study revealed that parents and teachers received no proper training. Some parents were concerned that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) expected them to participate in schools, but never provided any training on how they should collaborate with teachers in this regard. When parents and teachers from schools A and B were asked if they received any training on how to work as a team, they all mentioned that they have never been trained and wish they could be trained. Jeynes (2018) argues that the success of any collaboration lies in training and how the training is received by both parties. In this study, there was no training to pave the way for collaboration between parents and teachers. Researchers such as Mbokodi and Singh (2011) note that due to a lack of training, parents and teachers find themselves in a dire situation where they do not know how to fulfil their duties. Similar to Mbokodi and Singh (2011), James (2016) believes that all stakeholders in the school should be trained on how to work together to improve learning, which is the core business of each school. In line with this, the present study revealed that parents who were not trained refused to accept responsibilities that they regarded as being unfairly shifted onto them by teachers. Hornby and Blackwell (2018) also found that due to a lack of training, there were no proper working relationships in schools.

This study also found that as most parents were illiterate, it was difficult for them to understand the concept of partnership and how to contribute to their children's education. It was found in the study that **P2**, **P3**, and **P4** are not educated and they do not know they how they can help their children with schoolwork, as they cannot read. The lack of appropriate training of parents and teachers might be the main cause of poor working relations in schools. Okeke (2014) argues that parents must be trained on how to work effectively with teachers, especially to support learners

with special educational needs. Epstein (2011) talks of providing help to learners at home as central to any successful home-school collaboration. Moreover, Epstein further articulate that the school should offer training to enable leaders (including parents) to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents.

## **Policy**

When participants were asked about parental involvement policies, most teachers confirmed that there are no parental involvement policies in the school. Some parents made it clear that they are not aware of any policy in the school. P5 and P6 from school C had this to say:

*“We have never heard of any policy writing in the school. The teachers and the principal did not explain what policies are and how they should be designed.”*

While **P3** from school B mentioned that there are policies in the schools but have no idea what they are about. **P3** also claimed that the parental involvement policy was never mentioned. Similar to **P3**, **P1** from school A noted that:

*“Yes, there are policies in the school like HIV and AIDS. We do not discuss the policies with teachers. They only tell us that there are policies, however, I have never heard them telling us about parental involvement policy in the meeting.”*

The above response shows that parents are not engaged in the development of policies in the schools. The South African School Act (1996) articulates that parents should form part of the decision-making and development of the policy. One might assume that parents are not aware of the policies because teachers did not know that they must involve parents.

The responses from teachers did not differ much from the parents' responses. **T1**, **T3**, and **T6** mentioned that:

*“Yes, there is a policy, we have a school policy... where the school policy spells out how we handle discipline... how we handle our school rules, how we handle teacher and learner absenteeism, how homework and assessment are handled. In that policy, all these minor policies are laid out for the parents so that they can read on their own.”*

The researcher prompted the teachers by asking for clarity on the availability of a policy on parental involvement. **T1**, **T2**, and **T3** agreed that they do not have a solo policy on parental involvement, but all the above-mentioned policies are given to parents to peruse. The response above shows that in most schools there are no policies specifically for parental involvement. Teachers assumed that having a policy that they can send to parents means that they are involving them. Contrary to this assumption, Epstein (2005) stated that the policy should be written in the language that parents will understand, and parents should form part of the drafting of the school policies. The responses from parents and teachers show that there is a need

for parent-teacher working relations in the schools. Hence, the present study that is aiming at devising strategies that parents and teachers can use to work collaboratively in developing the school policies, as suggested by SASA (1996).

### **Communication**

The findings in this study show that there is poor communication between parents and teachers. Motlhaka, Stephen, Malatji (2020) argued that educators do not have the necessary communication skills, and are not well trained, on the level of communication between them and the parents. As parents and teachers were asked how and when they communicate with one another, most parents noted that teachers only communicate with them when their children did something bad at school. **P1**, **P3**, and **P2** articulated that when they see a child coming back from school with a letter of summoning, then they know that their child did something wrong at the school. **P3** strongly pointed that:

*“I just ignore the letters that the school sends because I know they will tell me that my child is a slow learner or that he abuses other kids. I was never called to the school when my child had performed well. They always complain and it’s annoying.”*

The above response shows that there is a need for this study because it might upskill teachers on ways to communicate with parents about the holistic development of a child. This statement is supported by the study of Moyo (2013), who argued that educators should communicate with the parents about school programmes and the development of the child. Teachers shared their sentiments about communicating with parents. **T2** and **T5** highlighted that they have a WhatsApp group with parents of learners in their classroom to discuss weekly activities on how parents can support their children. Not all teachers supported the idea of a WhatsApp group. **T3** pointed that when she created a WhatsApp group; some parents posted adverts and deviated from the purpose of the group.

The above response shows that parents also need to be trained on the importance of communication platforms for the benefit of learners. The advantage of the WhatsApp group is that teachers can communicate with parents in the language that they understand. Ndebele (2015) pointed out that the language of the parents and educators can either enhance or hinder communication between parents and educators. The findings of this study are supported by the study of Epstein (2011) that showed that parents should review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other printed and non-printed communications.

### **Conclusion**

From the findings presented above, it was found that parents in some South African schools do not know how to be involved in their children’s education. Some parents showed interest in education; however, with the limited information that teachers had on parental involvement, parents were not given a chance to participate in their children’s education. Parental involvement was seen as a strategy to improve learners’ academic performance. There is a lack of understanding of the role of

parents and teachers in involving parents in learners' education. Moreover, there is also a lack of understanding on how parents and teachers can collaboratively work as a team. It was thus suggested that schools should hold regular meetings, and communicate with parents and the community about how best they can improve learners' academic performance by working as a team.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

- If the school has a parent-teacher working relation policy, it will enable the follow up with individual teachers on how they engage with parents of learners in their class;
- Schools must have committees that deal with issues of learners' academic performance;
- Schools must hold workshops to train parents on how best they can be involved in their children's education;
- Schools must keep parents informed about the scope of learner academic content and other activities;
- Schools must have policies on parent-teacher working relations.

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